

SOPHOCLES





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TRAGEDIES AND FRAGMENTS

Translated by the late

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Dean of Wells

WITH NOTES RHYMED
CHORAL ODES AND
LYRICAL DIALOGUES

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

15 & 16 TAVISTOCK ST. COVENT GARDEN

1902

AM308502



Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO.
London & Edinburgh

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Hedley Fitton

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THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HERACLES.

Elder.

HYLLOS, son of HERACLES.

DEIANEIRA, wife of HERACLES.

LICHAS, a herald.

Attendant.

Messenger. 6

IOLE, a captive maiden.

Nurse.

Chorus of Trachinian Maidens.

ARGUMENT.—Æneus, king of Pleuron in Ætolia, had a fair daughter, Deianeira, and many sought her in marriage, chiefly the river god Achcloüs, whom she dreaded even to look upon. And Heracles came, and conquered the river god, and took Deianeira as his bride. And as they journeyed to Tiryns, they passed the stream Euenos, where Nessos the Kentaur was wont to carry travellers across. And as he bore Deianeira, he laid rude hands on her, and Heracles, seeing this, shot him with an arrow, that had been dipped in the venom of the Lernæan hydra; and Nessos, as he died, gave a rag, dipped in the blood of his wound, to Deianeira, and told her that it would be a love-charm to win back her husband's heart, should he ever prove unfaithful. And they lived together, and she bore him Hyllos and other children; and, though Heracles was light of love, yet she never used the charm, but kept her soul in patience.

And for many years Heracles went to and fro, fulfilling the labours which Eurystheus laid upon him, and, when these were over, being sore vexed, in his rage he slew Iphitos, the son of Eurytos, king of Œchalia, who had provoked him,

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and for this Zeus sentenced him to serve Omphale for a whole year in Lydia. And Deianeira fled from Tiryns, for fear of Eurystheus, and abode at Trachis. Now when the year of bondage to Omphale was over, Heracles, being in love with Iole, daughter of Eurytos, invaded her father's kingdom, and laid it waste, and sent Iole and other captive women to Tiryns, while he stayed to offer sacrifice to Zeus after his victory. And all this time Deianeira remained at home in much fear and trembling.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

SCENE—TRACHIS, in the courtyard of DEIANEIRA's house.

Enter DEIANEIRA, Attendant, and Chorus of Trachinian Maidens.

Deia "Tis an old saying, told of many men,
"Thou canst not judge man's life before he die,
Nor whether it be good or bad for him ;"¹
But I, before I tread the paths of death,
Know that my life is dark and full of woe,
Who, dwelling in my father Œneus' house,
At Pleuron, had, of all Ætolian maids,
Most cause to shrink from marriage ; for my hand
The river Acheloös came to seek,
In triple form my father suing for me ;
At one time as a bull in bodily form,
Then as a dragon wound his speckled length,
And then with human trunk and head of ox,
And from his shaggy beard there flowed the streams
Of his clear fountains.² Such a suitor I,
Receiving sadly, wished that I might die

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¹ The proverb itself, like most maxims of the same kind, came to be associated with a conspicuous name, and appears in Herodotus as the great lesson which Solon tried to impress on the mind of Croesus.

² It may be worth while to note the analogies which suggested the symbolic forms. In the strength of the river, and the sound of its many waters, men found what reminded them of the bull. As they saw its windings through the plain, it seemed like a great serpent. The figure of the human form, with the head of an ox, embodied the feeling that the river seemed to wind "as its own sweet will."

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Ere I approached his bed. And then there came,
Later, indeed, yet much beloved by me,
Zeus' noble son, whom fair Alcmena bore,
Who, wrestling with him in the strife of war, 20
Wrought out my rescue. What the mode of fight
I tell not, for I know not. He might tell
Whoe'er could gaze unshrinking at the sight;
For I was there, struck down with panic-fear
[Lest all my beauty should but bring me woe ;]
But Zeus, the God of battles, gave to us
Good issue, if in truth it be but good ;
For, sharing now the bed of Heracles
By special grace, I cherish fear on fear,
Still pining for him. Night brings woe with it,
*And if it bids it go, night but receives
Fresh trouble still. Yea ! sons were born to us ; 30
And like a husbandman who tills the soil
Of distant field, and sees the crop but once,
Sowing and reaping, so is he to them ;
Such course of life still sends my husband home,
And far from home, in servile labour bound
To one we know. And now when he has reached
The goal of all these labours, most of all
I sit and shudder. Since he smote the might
Of Iphitos, we here in Trachis dwell
Far from our land, and with a stranger host ;
And where he is, none knows. But he has left 40
In this his flight full bitter pangs for me,
And half I know he bears some weight of woe,
For no short time is passed, but ten long months
Added to five, and still no message comes.
And some sore woe comes on ; for so it tells,
The tablet which he left us, and I pray
The Gods that gift may not bring woe to me.

Attend. My mistress, Deianeira, I have seen thee
Bewailing oft, with loud and bitter wails, 50

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

The absence of thy Heracles ; but now,
(If it be right with bond-slave's thoughts to school
Those that are free, and I must speak for thee),—
How comes it thou art rich in many sons,
Yet sendest none to track thy husband's steps ?
Not even Hyllos, whom 'twere fit to send,
If he care aught about his father's fate,
To find it prospering. And lo ! he comes,
Just at the moment, speeding by the house.
So, if I seem to give thee counsel good,
Thou may'st at once make use of him and it.

60

● *Enter HYLLOS.*

Deian. My son, dear boy, good words of counsel fall
E'en from the meanest. Lo ! this woman speaks,
Slave though she be, a free and noble speech.

Hyllos. What was it, mother ? Tell me, if thou may'st.

Deian. That not to seek where now thy father dwells,
After such length of absence, brings thee shame.

Hyllos. Yet if one trust to rumours, I know well.

Deian. And where dost hear, my son, that he abides ?

Hyllos. Long while, from seed-time unto seed-time
round,

They say he served a Lydian lady's will.¹

70

Deian. Could he do that, one might hear anything.

Hyllos. But, so I hear, from this he has escaped.

Deian. Where now, or dead or living, tell they of him ?

Hyllos. 'Tis said that he makes war, or plans to make,
On some Eubœan town of Eurytos'.

Deian. And dost thou know, my son, that he has left
With me true oracles of that same land ?

Hyllos. What were they, mother ? I know nought of
them.

Deian. This, or that he shall find the end of life,

¹ The characteristic effeminacy of the Lydian men made bondage to a Lydian woman the extremest degradation.

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Or having this his task accomplished, 80
Shall, through the coming years of all his life,
Rejoice and prosper. When the scales thus hang,
Wilt thou not go, my child, to give thy help,
*When either we a great deliverance gain,
*Or, if he perish, perish too with him ?

Hyllos. Yes, I will go, my mother. Had I known
The utterance of these oracles, long since
I had been there. And, now that I have heard, 90
I will not fail in aught to learn the truth,
The whole truth, of these matters. Yet the fate
Which waits upon my father gives no cause
For hasty dread and over-anxious care.

Deian. Go then, my son. To hear he prospers well,
Though one hear late, brings balance large of gain.

[*Exit HYLLOS.*]

STROPHE I

Chor. Thee, whom the Night, star-spangled, bringeth
forth,

Smitten and spoiled by thee,
Whom, in thy strength of fire,
She lulls to calmest couch,¹

On thee I call, our sun-god, Helios,
Tell this, where now he dwells,
Alcmena's noble son, (Thou ever bright,

In sheen of glory clad ;)
Or in the sea's deep glades,
Or taking rest in either continent ?² 100

Tell this, O Lord, whose eye
Sees with surpassing might.

¹ The words embody the old *mythos* that the sun each night lay down to rest in a winged boat in the far West, and that the boat bore him over the great ocean till he appeared once again in the East.

² In the earliest Greek geography the earth was divided into two continents only, Africa—of which but little was known—being grouped now with Europe and now with Asia.

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ANTISTROPHE I

For, lo ! I hear that Deianeira still,
Once wooed in many a strife,
Now like a wailing bird,
With sad and sore-vexed heart,
Can never lull to rest the strong desire
Of eyes unclimmed with tears,
But ever nurses unforgetting dread
As to her husband's paths,
And wastes her life in anxious, widowed couch, ¹¹⁰
Still looking, in her woe,
For doom of coming ill ;

STROPHE II

For as one sees, when North or South wind blows
In strength invincible,
Full many a wave upon the ocean wide,
Sweeping and rushing on,
So like a Cretan sea,
The stormy grief of life
Now bringeth low the son of Cadmos old,¹
Now lifts him up again ;
Yet some one of the Gods
Still keeps him from the house of Hades dark, ¹²⁰
As one who may not fail.

ANTISTROPHE II

Wherefore, half blaming thee, I speak my words,
Kindly, yet thwarting thee,
And say thou should'st not fret away good hope ;
Not even He, who reigns in glory crowned,
The son of Cronos high,
Hath given to men a painless heritage,
*But still the whirling courses of the Bear
Bring grief and joy in turn. ¹³⁰

¹ Heracles, as being of Thebes, is described as the son of the mythical founder of the city.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

EPODE

For neither does the spangled night remain,
Nor the dark Fates, nor wealth, abide with men ;
Quickly they leave this man, and pass to that,
Both joy, and loss of joy ;
And this, I say that thou, our queen, should'st have
For ever in thy hopes. •

For who hath known in Zeus forgetfulness
Of those He children calls ?

140

Deian. Thou comest, one may guess, as having learnt
My many woes : yet may'st thou never know,
(As now thou knowest not,) by suffering taught,
How I consume my soul. The tender plant
Grows in such climes where neither God's hot sun,
Nor storm, nor any blast may trouble it,
But in pure joy it lives its painless life,
Until that hour when maiden gains the name
Of wife, and gains her share of nightly grief,
Or caring for her husband, or her babes. 150
Then might one see, by that experience taught,
How I am crushed with sorrows. Many a woe
Have I wept bitter tears for. Now of one
I 'll tell thee, which I never knew before ;
For when our king, our Heracles, went forth
From home for his last journey, then with me
He leaves a tablet, old, and written o'er
With special rules, which never until then
Had he the heart to tell me, though he went
On many a labour, but still started forth,
As one about to prosper, not to die. 160
But now, like one as good as dead he told
What chattels I should take as marriage dower,
What shares of all their father's land he gave
In portions to his sons,¹ and fixed a time

¹ The division connects itself with the *mythos* of the return of the Heracleidæ to claim the whole Peloponnesos as their inheritance.

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That when for one whole year and three months more
He from this land was absent, then 'twas his,
Or in that self-same hour to die, or else,
Escaping that one crisis, thenceforth live
With life unvexed. Such things, he said, stood firm ¹⁷⁰
By doom of Gods, and thus the end would come
Of all the labours wrought by Heracles ;
For so, he said, Dodona's ¹ ancient oak
Had spoken by the voice of twin-born doves.
And of these things the unerring truth is come,
This very hour, as fate decreed it should ;
And so, my friends, while sleeping sweetest sleep,
I start in fear and terror, lest I live
• Bereaved of him, the noblest man of all.

Chor. Hush such ill-omened words ; for, lo ! I see
One coming crowned, as if for joyful news.

Enter Messenger, his head crowned with laurel.

Mess. My mistress, Deianeira, first of all ¹⁸⁰
That come as couriers, I will free thy soul
From every fear. Know then, Alcmena's son
Is living, and, victorious in the fight,
Brings his first-fruits unto his country's Gods.

Deian. What news is this, old man, thou bring'st to
me ?

Mess. That he, thy husband, praised of many men,
Will soon appear in strength of victory.

Deian. What townsman, or what stranger, told thee
this ?

Mess. In the wide meadow where the oxen graze,

¹ The oracles at Dodona, given by the Pelasgic Zeus in the land of the Thesprotians, were uttered from a grove of oaks. At first the Selli were the interpreters, then three aged priestesses. Then grew up the *mythos* (rising partly from a play on words) that two doves had flown from Egyptian Thebes, and that one of them flew to the oracle at Dodona, the other to that of Ammon in the Libyan oasis.

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Lichas the herald tells it to the crowd,
And I, thus hearing him, rushed forth at once, 190
That I might be the first to tell it thee,
Gain some fair guerdon, and thy favour win.

Deian. If all goes well, why comes he not himself?

Mess. But little ease is there for him, O lady;
For all the Melian people stand around,
With eager quest, nor has he power to move,
For each one seeks to learn the uttermost,
And will not slack his craving till he hear
His heart's desire. Thus he, against his will,
With them, to meet their will, abides a while;
But thou shalt see him stand before thee soon.

Deian. O Zeus, who rulest Cæta's unmown mead,¹ 200
Though tardily, thou giv'st us fullest joy.
Shout, O ye maidens, shout, beneath the roof,
And ye beyond the courtyard, for we gain
From this report a light of rising dawn
We had not dared to hope for.

Chor. Let all within exult,
That wait their wedded joy,
With shouts on altar-hearth;
And with them let the stronger voice of men
Proclaim thy name, Apollo, guardian God,
Lord of the quiver bright,
And ye, O maidens, Pæan, Pæan raise; 210
Shout out his Sister's name,
Ortygian² Artemis,
Who smites the fawn, torch-armed in either hand,
With all the neighbouring Nymphs.
I spring aloft, I can no more withstand
The flute's clear voice, O sovereign of my soul.
Behold, it stirs and works,

¹ Meadows consecrated to the Gods were never ploughed or mown.

² The epithet was, in the first instance, applied to Artemis in her temple at Chalkis in Ætolia.

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Evoi ! Oh, Evoi !
The ivy-wreath that leads me back again
To hottest strife of Bacchic revelry.

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Io ! Oh, Io !
Pæan ! Oh, Pæan !
Look thou, dear lady, look ;
Before thy face they come,
And thou may'st see them clear.

*Enter LICHAS, followed by IOLE and a company of
Captive Women.*

Deian. I see it, O my friends, nor does it 'scape
Mine eye's keen watch that I should fail to note
This proud array. I welcome thee, O herald,
Though thou com'st late, if thou bring'st welcome news.

Lichas. Well are we come, and we are greeted well,
For what we gain in act. It needs must be
That one who prospers should receive good words.

230

Deian. Ah ! dearest friend, first tell me what I first
Desire to know. Come Heracles alive ?

Lichas. I, for my part, left him in strength of health,
Living and well, unsmitten of disease.

Deian. And where ? At home, or on a foreign soil ?

Lichas. There is a high Eubæan promontory
Where he now marks his altars' limits out,
His first-fruits offering to Kenæan Zeus.¹

Deian. Fulfilling vows, or led by oracles ?

Lichas. The vows he made when with his spear he
sacked
The city of these women whom thou see'st.

240

Deian. And these, in Heaven's name, who and whence
are they ?

¹ The promontory itself was named Kenæon, and there men pointed to the temple of Zeus at the summit, and the tomb of Lichas. What is described is not merely the act of sacrifice, but the consecration of the ground for ever, as the fruits of his conquest of the lands.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Full sad, unless they cheat me with their grief.

Lichas. These, when he sacked the town of Eurytos,
He chose his own possession and the Gods'.

Deian. And was it against that city that he went,
That endless time of days innumerable ?

Lichas. Not so. By far the longest time he spent
In Lydia ; not, so says he, of free choice,
But sold as slave. Let not my tale, dear lady, 150
Move thee to wrath, when Zeus himself appears
The doer of the deed. And he, being sold¹
To Omphale, the alien, so he said,
Served one whole year, And thus, his soul being vexed
At this reproach, he vowed a bitter vow
That he would bring to bond-slave's low estate,
With wife and child, the man who caused this shame :
Nor did he speak in vain ; but when his guilt
Was cleansed, he came, with army hired to help, 200
Against the town of Eurytos ; for he,
So said he, of all men that live, alone
Was guilty of that suffering, in that he,
When Heracles had come, in hearth and home
An old guest-friend, provoked his soul with words,
And many things spake out in baneful mood ;
As this, that he, though having in his hands
His deadly darts, in skill of archery
Would fall below his children, and that he
*Wore out his life a slave instead of free ;
And once at feast-time, staggering with the wine,
He cast him out. And then, in wrath for this,
When Iphitos to yon Tirynthian hill 270
Came tracking out the course of wandering steeds,
With eyes tha' looked this way, and thoughts turned
that,
He hurled him headlong from the tower-like crag.

¹ The *mythos* ran that Zeus, wroth at the murder of Iphitos, sent Hermes to sell Heracles to Omphale.

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And full of wrath for this thing that he did,
 Olympian Zeus, the father of us all,
 Sent him forth sold in bondage, spared him not,
 Because he slew this man, alone of men,
 With base deceit ; for, had he come on him
 In open fight, then Zeus had pardoned him
 With justice conquering ; for wanton wrong
 Not even Gods can bear with. Those that waxed 280
 Too haughty in the pride of evil speech
 Are dwellers now in Hades, all of them,
 Their city captured. These thou look'st upon,
 Falling from high estate to piteous life,
 Now come to thee : for so thy husband charged,
 And I, his faithful servant, do his will.
 And as for him, when he pure sacrifice
 Has offered unto Zeus, his fathers' God,
 For that great capture, think of him as near ;
 Of all things spoken well the sweetest this. 290

Chor. Now, O my queen, thou see'st thy joy full clear,
 Part close at hand, part learning by report.

Deian. How can I but rejoice with all my heart,
 Hearing my husband's high prosperity ?
 [Needs must that that should go along with this ;]
 And yet, for those who scan and look around,
 Is cause to fear for one who prospers much,
 Lest he too fail. Sad pity creeps on me,
 My friends, when I behold these wretched ones
 In a strange land as homeless, fatherless ; 300
 And they who sprang, perchance, from free-born sires,
 Now lead the life of bond-slaves. Grant, O Zeus,
 Thou God averting evil, that I ne'er
 May see Thee coming thus against my seed,
 Nor, if Thou needs must work Thy will on them,
 Fulfil it while I live. Such dread I feel
 Beholding these. [*To IOLE.*] O hapless one, what lot,
 A maiden's, or a mother's, falls to thee ?

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Thy growth and form would say that thou had'st known
None of these things ; and sure they witness too
That thou art nobly born. Come, Lichas, say
Whose daughter is this stranger ? Who her mother, ³¹⁰
And who the father that begat her ? Speak,
For more than all my whole heart pities her,
As, more than all, her soul is quick, to feel.

Lichas. How should I know ? Why ask'st thou me ?
Perchance

She springs from those not held in least repute.

Deian. Of royal race ? The seed of Eurytos ?

Lichas. I know not, for I did not question much.

Deian. Has none of her companions told her name ?

Lichas. Not so. My work in silence I performed.

Deian. [*To IOLE.*] Tell me, at least, O sad one, of
thyself. ³²⁰

['Tis sorrow not to know thee who thou art.]

Lichas. I trow that now she will not utter words,
True to her former self, that would not speak
Of matters small or great, but ever sad,
In travail sore with weight of bitter chance,
She weeps and weeps, since first she left her home,
Where all the winds sweep wildly. This her state
Is ill for her, and yet it calls for pity.

Deian. Let her then be, and go within the house,
Just as may please her best, nor let her have ³³⁰
Fresh grief from me, as added unto those
She bears already. That which now she has
Is full enough. And now let all of us
Go to the house, that thou may'st hasten on
Where thou desirest, and that I may set
In meet array what calls for care within.

[*Exeunt LICHAS, IOLE, and the other captives,*
DEIANEIRA following.

Mess. [*Stopping DEIANEIRA on her way out.*] First tarry
here a little while and learn,

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Apart from these, whom thou dost lead within,
And what thou hast not heard, may now learn well,
For I have got the whole truth of these things.

Deian. What means this? Wherefore dost thou stop
me thus?

Mess. Stand thou, and list; for neither did'st thou hear
An idle speech before, nor now, I trow. [³⁴⁰

Deian. Shall we, then, call those strangers back again?
Or wilt thou tell thy tale to me and these?

Mess. Nought hinders thee and these. Let those alone.

Deian. And they indeed are gone; so tell thy tale.

Mess. Of all he said this man not one word speaks
With truth and right, but either basest now,
Or else before, as falsest herald came.

Deian. What say'st thou? Tell me clearly what thou
mean'st;

I nothing know of all the things thou say'st. 350

Mess. I, I myself heard this man say aloud—
Yes, before many hearers—that our lord,
For this girl's sake, did conquer Eurytos,
And captive take high-towered Œchalia;
That Love alone of all the Gods that are
Had charmed him to achieve this enterprise,
And not what passed in Lydia, nor his toil
In bondage unto Omphale, nor fate
Of Iphitos; and this man, thrusting back
All speech of Love, says just the contrary.
But when he could not win her father's will
To give his child to share clandestine bed, 360
He, with some cause of quarrel furbished up,
Invades the country ruled by Eurytos,
And slays the king her father, and lays low
Her city; and, as thou beholdest now,
He brings her to this house (believe it, lady)
Not without purpose, no, nor as a slave;
Look not for that: it is not probable,

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

When he has been so hot in his desire.
So it seemed good to tell the truth to thee,
The whole truth as I heard it from this man ;
And many heard it also, e'en as I, 370
In all the throng of Trachis' market-place ;
So thou may'st test the truth. And if I speak
Unwelcome news, I too am grieved indeed ;
But at all costs I speak the right and true.

Deian. Oh ! woe is me ! What fate is come on me ?
What mischief have I brought beneath my roof,
In secret lurking ? Ah ! and was she then
Without a name, as he who brought her swore ?

Mess. Noble is she in beauty as in race, 380
The daughter of the house of Eurytos,
And Iole her name, of whose descent
He nothing asked, forsooth, and nothing told.

Chor. A curse on all the wicked, most of all,
On him who loves ill deeds of secret guile.

Deian. What must I do, my friends ? As one o'er-
whelmed,
I stand perplexed by this report we hear.

Chor. Go, ask the man, for he, perchance, will speak
Clear answers, if thou question roundly with him.

Deian. And I will go ; for wisely thou dost speak.

Mess. Shall we remain ? Or what is right to do ? 390

Deian. Remain ; for here the man approaches us,
Not summoned, but self-bidden, from the house.

Enter LICHAS.

Lichas. What message hast thou, queen, for Heracles ?
Tell me, for I, thou see'st, am on my way.

Deian. How quickly, having come with lingering time,
Thou startest, ere we can our talk renew.

Lichas. Here am I, if thou seek'st to question me.

Deian. And wilt thou give thy pledge of truthful
speech ?

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Lichas. In all things I do know, so help me, Zeus.

Deian. Who then is this, the maid thou bring'st to
us ? 400

Lichas. Eubœan is she. What her birth I know not.

Mess. Ho, then ! Look here. Dost know to whom
thou speak'st ?

Lichas. And thou, why ask'st thou question such as
this ?

Mess. Be bold, and speak, if thou my meaning see'st.

Lichas. I speak unto the queenly Deianeira,
Daughter of Cœneus, wife of Heracles,
My mistress too, unless I see amiss.

Mess. 'Twas this I wished to learn from thee. Thou
say'st

That she stands here, thy mistress ?

Lichas. Rightly so.

Mess. Well, then, what forfeit wilt thou rightly pay, 410
If thou be found as one doing wrong to her ?

Lichas. "Doing wrong ?" What cunning riddles,
pray, are these ?

Mess. None here, 'tis thou hast gone too far in that.

Lichas. I go : I was a fool to list so long.

Mess. Not so, before thou answerest one small word.

Lichas. Say what thou wilt. Thou art not taciturn.

Mess. That captive whom thou broughtest to this
house,

Dost thou know her ?

Lichas. E'en so. Why askest thou ?

Mess. Did'st thou not say that she whom thou did'st
bring,

*On whom thou look'st with such blank ignorance, 420
Was Iole, the child of Eurytos ?

Lichas. Among what men ? Say, who and whence
is he

Shall come and witness that he heard me say it ?

Mess. Full many a townsman : In the market-place

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Of Trachis all the crowd did hear thy speech.

Lichas. I said I heard it, but 'tis not the same
To speak one's guess, and vouch the matter true.

Mess. "One's guess!" And did'st not thou assert
with oath

That thou did'st bring her, bride for Heracles?

Lichas. "His bride!" By all the Gods, my mistress
dear,

Tell of this stranger, who and what he is. 431

Mess. One who was by and heard thee, when thou
said'st ~

How through desire for her the city fell,
And how 'twas not the Lydian dame, but love
For this fair maid that brought it to the dust.

Lichas. Bid the man go, dear lady. Thus to prate
With one of mind diseased is hardly sane.

Deian. Now, by great Zeus, who flashes forth his fire
On yon high glens of Cæta, cheat me not,
I charge thee, of the truth. Thou dost not tell
Thy tale to wife of evil mood, nor one
Who does not know men's ways, and how their wont
Is not to love the same for evermore; 140

And one who stands in combat against Love,
As athlete in close conflict, scarce is wise.
For he reigns high, supreme above the Gods,
And sways them as he will; (yea, sways my soul,
And why not then another's, like to me?)

So, should I blame my husband for his fate
In catching this disease, I should indeed
Have lost my reason; or if I should blame
This woman, guilty of no shameful deed,
Or wrong against me. No. It is not so;
But if, being taught by him, thou speakest false,
Then thou hast learnt a lesson far from good, 430
And, if thou art self-taught in this deceit,
Then, when thou seek'st to play the part of good,

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Thou shalt be seen as evil. Nay, but speak
The truth, the whole truth. No good fate is that,
When one free-born must bear the liar's name.
How can'st thou 'scape detection? There are many
To whom thou said'st it, who will tell it me;
And if thou fearest, thou dost ill to shrink,
For not to learn, that might indeed distress me;
But how can knowledge harm me? Has he not,
Our Heracles, of all the men that live,
Wedded most wives, and yet not one of them
Has had from me or evil speech or taunt,
Nor will she have, though she in love for him
Should melt and pine; for lo! I pitied her
When first I saw her, for her beauty's sake;
For it, I knew, had wrecked her life's fond hope,
And she, poor soul, against her will, had wrought
The ruin of her fatherland, and brought
Its people into bondage. Let all this
Go to the winds. For thee I bid thee, I,
Be base to others, but to me be true.

480

Chor. Yes, hearken thou to her considerate speech,
And then in time to come thou shalt not blame
This woman, and from me shalt favour win.

470

Lichas. Well, then, dear mistress, since I see that thou,
Being human, hast a human heart, and know'st
No stubborn purpose, I will tell thee all,
The whole truth, nought concealing. All is so
As this man tells thee. Strong desire for her
Did seize on Heracles, and so her land,
Æchalia, was laid waste by armed host,
And brought full low. And this (for I must tell
His doings also) he nor bade conceal
Nor yet denied, but I myself, dear lady,
Fearing to grieve thy heart with these my words,
Did sin, if thou dost count it as a sin.
And now, since thou dost know the whole of things,

480

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

For his sake and for thine, full equally,
Treat the girl kindly, and those words of thine
Thou said'st of her, be firm and true to them,
For he, whose might prevails in all things else,
In all is conquered by his love for her.

Deian. We share thy thoughts, will do as thou hast
said, 490

And will not stir, by fighting with the Gods,
The ill now brought upon us. Let us go
Within the house, that thou may'st bear my message,
And gifts for gifts which it is meet to send,
That thou may'st take them, for it were not right
That thou who cam'st with such a company
Should go back empty. [*Exeunt DEIANEIRA, LICHAS,*
and Messenger.

STROPHE

Chor. Great is the conquering might
Which she of Kypros boasteth evermore.
I hasten by what touches on the Gods,
And will not even tell
How she beguiled the son of Kronos old, 500
Or Hades of the dark,
Or him who shakes the earth, Poseidaôn ;
But who for this fair bride,
As well-matched rivals came,
Before the marriage-feast ?
Who fought in many a struggle sore and sharp,
Blows thickly falling, wrestlings in the dust ?

ANTISTROPHE

A mighty stream was one,
Dread form of monster bull, with lofty horn,
The torrent Acheloös, river-God,
Come from Cœniadæ,¹

¹ Cœniadæ, at the mouth of the Acheloös in Acarnania.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

And one from Thebes which Bacchos owns as his, 510
 Wielding his pliant bow,
His spear and club, the son of Zeus supreme.
 So they in conflict met,
 Urged on by hot desire ;
 And She, of Kypros queen,
Alone stood by, fair source of marriage joy,
Wielding her rod of umpire's sovereignty.

EPODE

Clash of hands and darts,
And, mingling with them both,
The din of horns, were there,
Limbs intertwined with limbs,
Fierce blows from butting head, 520
And loud deep cries on either side were heard.
And she in beauty delicate and fair,
Sat still awaiting her appointed lord,
Where from the hill the prospect far was seen.
 Such is the tale we tell,
 *E'en as her mother saw ;
 And lo ! the bride's fair face,
 The prize of all the strife,
 Still piteously abides,
 And from her mother's care
 She, like lorn heifer, strays. 530

Enter DEIANEIRA.

Deian. While, O my friends, the stranger speaks
 within,
To those poor captives, as about to start,
I come without to see you secretly,
In part to tell you what my hands devise,
In part to crave your pity for my wrongs.
This maiden I receive,—and yet I trow
No longer maid, but one already wed,—

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

As sailor who takes in a troublous freight,
So a bad bargain I receive in her,
Poor wage for all my love. And so we share,
We twain, th' embrace one coverlet conceals.
Such is the meed of all my care of home,
That Heracles, whom men call true and good, 540
Hath sent to me for all my years of toil;
And I indeed have found it hard to feel
Fierce wrath against him, with this fell disease
Sore smitten as he is. But who could bear,
What woman's heart, with such a one to dwell,
And share one bed with her? Her bloom I see
Still coming on, and mine begins to wane;
*And well I know the eye is wont to seize
*That blossom fair, and turn the foot from age.
And so I fear lest Heracles be found 550
My lawful spouse, but husband fond and true
Of her the younger. But, as I have said,
It is not good a wife of judgment sound
Should show her anger. Therefore, O my friends,
I tell you what I have as remedy
To set me free. A gift long since I had
From the old Kentaur stored in vase of bronze,
Which I, while yet a girl, from Nessos had,
As he, with swarth, rough mane, did bleed to death,
For he was wont to carry men for pay
Across Evenos' deep and torrent stream,
Nor plying oars, nor spreading sail of ship. 560
And he, when first, as bride of Heracles,
I followed from my father's house sent forth,
Upon his shoulders bore me, and, mid-stream,
With rude hands touched me. And I shouted out;
And then the son of Zeus quick turned, and shot
A wingèd dart, which, whizzing through the breast,
Pierced to the lungs. And then the monster spake
In agony of death thus much: "O child

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Of Ceneus old, if thou wilt list to me,
Some profit of my ferryings thou shalt have, 570
Since thee I bore the last. If thou wilt take
The clotted blood that oozes from my wound,
Where the Lernæan hydra, monster dread,
The darts in dark gall dipped, this, this shall be
Thy love-charm o'er the soul of Heracles,
That he shall never look on woman fair,
And love her more than thee." And I, dear friends,
Recalling this, (for, on his death, within
I kept it safely stored,) have dipped this robe,
And added all things that he bade me do, 580
While yet he lived; and now 'tis fully done.
Base deeds of daring may I never know,
Nor learn that lesson; those that dare I hate.
But if by love-spells meant for Heracles,
We can in anywise this girl o'ercome,
The thing is planned and done, unless I seem
To you to work in vain; if so, I cease.

Chor. If there be ground for faith in what thou dost,
'Thou seem'st to us not badly to have planned.

Deian. Thus stands my faith, I think it probable, 590
While yet I have not made experiment.

Chor. But thou should'st know by act, for thinking
only
Without a trial gives no certain proof.

Deian. Well, we shall know full soon, for lo! he stands
E'en now outside the door, and quickly comes;
Only keep ye my counsel. In the dark,
Though thou work shameful things, thou 'scapest shame.

Enter LICHAS.

Lichas. Come, child of Ceneus, tell me what to do;
For we long time have loitered in delay.

Deian. This very thing I have been doing, Lichas, 600
While thou within did'st to those strangers speak,

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

That thou should'st take this stately-woven robe,
Gift to my husband from these hands of mine.
And when thou giv'st it say that none that lives,
Prior to him must wear it on his flesh,
Nor must the light of sunshine look on it,
Nor sacred shrine, nor flame of altar hearth,
Before he stands, conspicuous, showing it
On day of sacrifice, in sight of Gods.
For so I vowed, if I should see him safe
At home, or hear his safety well assured,
To clothe him with this tunic, and send forth
*The glorious worshipper in glorious robe ;
And thou shalt take a token of these things,
Which he, the seal beholding, will know well.
But go thy way, and first take heed to this,
Being but a courier, not to meddle much ;
And next so act that from myself and him,
Our thanks from single may as twofold come.'

Lichas. As true as I serve Hermes in my work, 610
A trusty messenger, I will not fail
To take and give this package as it is,
And add good proof of all thy messages.

Deian. Now then start forth, for thou dost know
right well

How things within our dwelling chance to stand.

Lichas. I know, and I will say that all is well.

Deian. And how the stranger maiden fares, thou
know'st,

[Seeing that warm welcome I received her with.]

Lichas. So much so, that my heart leapt up for joy.

Deian. Why should'st thou tell aught else ? for much
I fear 630

Lest thou should'st tell my longing love for him,
Before we know if he doth long for us.

[*Exit LICHAS ; DEIANEIRA withdraws
into her house.*]

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

STROPHE I

Chor. O ye that dwell along the harbour's shore,
Or by the rock's hot streams,¹
And Cæta's mountain slopes,
Or the mid Melian lake,
Or by Her shore who owns the golden darts,
Where the high courts of all the Hellenes meet,
From Pylæ named of old.

ANTISTROPHE I

Soon will the clear-voiced flute return to you
With no unfitting strain,
But like a lyre with hymn
And song the Gods approve;²
For, lo! the hero whom Zeus owns as son,
Of fair Alcmena born, hastes home to us,
With trophies of high worth.

640

STROPHE II

Him we, (for twelve long months,
Still waiting, knowing nought of all that passed,)
Counted as wanderer far upon the sea;
And she, his dear-loved wife,
Weeping with many tears,
Full sadly wore her saddened heart away,
But Ares, roused to rage,
Hath freed us from our dark and troublous days.

660

ANTISTROPHE II

Ah may he come, yea, come!

¹ The rock's hot streams are those between the mountains and the coast which gave a name to the narrow pass of Thermopylæ. The Melian lake is strictly a gulf. The goddess of the golden darts is Artemis, the guardian of all the havens of Thessaly. The "high Courts of the Hellenes" are the Amphictyonic assemblies that held their sessions near Thermopylæ.

² Ordinarily the "flute" was the accompaniment of wild ecstatic songs and dances. "Now," the Chorus says, "it shall be subdued into a calm, serene music like that of the lyre at festivals of the Gods."

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Let not his ship of many oars lie to,
Before this city welcomes his approach ;

Leaving the island hearth,

Where he his victim slays,

*Thence may he come, yea, come with strong desire, 660

Tempered by suasive spell,

Of that rich unguent, as the Mother spake.

Enter DEIANEIRA from the house.

Deian. Ah, women ! how I fear lest all I did
But now be found as having gone too far.

Chor. What now, O child of Ceneus, Deianeira ?

Deian. I know not ; but I tremble lest too soon
I seem with fair hopes to have wrought great ill.

Chor. Not from those gifts thou gav'st to Heracles ?

Deian. Yes. It is that ; and never more would I
Bid any yield to impulse hazardous. 670

Chor. If thou may'st tell it, tell me what thou dread'st.

Deian. Thus much has happened, O my friends, most
strange,

For you to hear, yea, passing all belief :

For that with which but now I did anoint

The stately snow-white robe, a lock of wool,

This is all gone, by nought within consumed,

But, self-devoured, it withers and decays,

And crumbles on the surface of the stone.

And that thou may'st the whole strange story know,

How this was done, I will unfold the tale ;

For I, of all the monster Kentaur taught, 680

(His side sore smitten with the bitter dart,)

No precept left undone, but kept them all,

Like writing on a tablet-book of bronze,

Which nothing may wash out. And this command

Was given, and this I did, to keep the charm

Medicinal, untouched by fire, or sun,

In sheltered closet, till the hour should come

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

To use the fresh-spread unguent. Thus I did ;
And now the time to act was come, I spread it,
Within the house, in secret, with a lock
Of fleecy wool from off mine own sheep cut ; 696
And then I folded it, and placed it safe,
Untouched by sunlight, in a hollow chest,
The gift, as ye have seen. And now, within
Adventuring, I behold a marvel, strange
To tell, by human thought unfathomable ;
For I, by chance, had flung the wisp of wool,
In full broad sunshine. Then as it grew hot
It melts away, and crumbles in the earth,
In look most like to saw-dust one may see
• Where men work timber ; so it fell and lay, 700
And from the earth where it had lain, there oozed
Thick clots of foam, as when in vintage bright,
Rich must is poured upon the earth from vine
Sacred to Bacchos ; and I know not now
Which way of thought to turn, but see too well
That I have done a deed most perilous.
What cause had he, the Kentaur, dying then,
To wish me well on whose account he died ?
It cannot be. But seeking to destroy
The man that smote him, he beguiled my soul ;
And I, too late, when knowledge nought avails, 710
That knowledge gain. For, if my soul errs not,
I, I alone (ah me !) shall work his death ;
For well I know the piercing dart sore vexed
E'en Cheiron, though a God,¹ and, where it smites,
Lays low in death 'all monsters. Can it be
That this black venom, oozing from his wounds,
With blood commingled, shall not slay him too ?

¹ The legend ran that when the Kentaur took refuge in Cheiron's cave on Pelion, Heracles, who was pursuing them, wounded Cheiron in the knee, and he, being a God, could neither be healed nor die, till Zeus gave leave to him to descend to Hades in lieu of Prometheus.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

So I at least must deem ; yet deem I too
If he shall die, that I shall die with him 720
By that same death-stroke ; since for one to live
With evil fame who makes her chiefest boast
Not to be evil, that is hard to bear.

Chor. We needs must shrink at thought of dreadful
deeds, vt

Yet should not count too soon on good or ill.

Deian. Not so, not so ; in schemes that are not good⁷³
There is no hope to give one confidence.

Chor. And yet for those who sin not wilfully
Anger is softened ; and that case is thine.

Deian. Such words one well might speak, who does
not share

The ill, on whom no evil presses close. 730

Enter HYLLOS.

Chor. 'Twere well that thou should'st cease all further
speech,

Unless thou sayest aught to this thy son ;
For here he comes who went to seek his sire.

Hyllos. My mother, I could wish one thing of three—
Or that thou should'st no longer live ; or else
Live, and be called my mother nevermore ;
Or gain in some way better heart than now.

Deian. What is there, son, thus worthy of thy hate ?

Hyllos. Know, of thy husband, whom I father call,
Thou art, this very day, the murderess. 740

Deian. Ah me, my son ! what word is this thou
bring'st ?

Hyllos. One which no power on earth can cancel now ;
For who can make undone what once has been ?

Deian. What say'st thou, O my son ? By what man
taught,

Say'st thou that I have done so base a deed ?

Hyllos. I, with these eyes my father's piteous fate

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Myself beholding, to no tales gave heed.

Deian. Where did'st thou meet him? Where stand
by and see?

Hyllos. If thou must learn, 'tis well to tell thee all.

When he had sacked the town of Eurytos,
Renowned in story, and was on his way
With trophies and first-fruits of victory, 750
There stands a high Eubœan promontory,
Keneian named, sea-washed on either side,
And there to Zeus, his father, he marks out
His altars, and the consecrated grove,
And there with eager welcome first I saw him;
And, when about to offer sacrifice
Of many victims, Lichas comes from home,
His home-reared herald, bearing in his arms
Thy gift, the fatal robe. And he, arrayed
In it, as thou did'st bid him, slaughtered there
Twelve oxen tall, the first-fruits of the spoil; 760
But altogether, cattle great and small,
A hundred did he offer. First, poor wretch,
With soul serene, rejoicing to be decked
In that apparel, thus he made his prayers.
But, when the blood-fed flame from resinous pine
And from the holy things began to blaze,
There came a sweat upon his flesh, and lo!
As though fresh glued by some artificer,
The tunic folds around his every joint,
And through his bones there went convulsive starts,
And when the venom of the hateful snake 770
Devoured his flesh, he called poor Lichas to him,
In nothing guilty of this crime of thine,
And asked with what device he brought the robe.
And he, poor wretch, nought knowing, said the gift
Was thine alone, as thou did'st bid him say.
And when he heard it, and a spasm of pain
Had seized his chest, he grasped him by the foot,

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Just where the ancle hinges on its joint,
And hurled him on the rock, on either side
Washed by the waters ; then from curling locks 780
The white brain gushed, his skull being split in twain,¹
With blood commingled. And a cry went up,
A cry of all the people, as they saw
So tortured one, and one so foully slain.
And no one dared to go and face the man,
For strange convulsions drew him, now to earth,
Now lifted up, with cries of agony,
And all the rocks re-echoed his complaints,
The Locrian headlands and Eubœan capes.
And, when his spirit failed, full oft he dashed
Himself upon the earth, full oft he groaned, 790
Cursing his marriage that he made with thee,
That wedlock fraught with evils, and the ties
With Cœneus made, how great a bane he found them
Wearing his life. And when from out the smoke
That clung around he turned his eye askance,
And saw me in the midst of all the host,
Weeping for grief, he gazed, and called on me.
“My son, come hither, turn not thou aside
From this my trouble, even though ’twere thine
To die as I am dying. But, I pray,
Bear me away ; and chiefly, place me there
Where never mortal eye may look on me ; 800
Or from this land, at least, if pity move thee,
With all speed bear me, that I die not here.”
And when he thus had charged me, in mid-ship
We placed him, and to this land steered our way,
He groaning in convulsions, and ere long
Or living or just dead wilt thou behold him.

¹ Popular tradition in the time of Æschylos, (p. 29,) pointed to a rock in the Eubœan gulf as the grave of Lichas. Later legends found a human form in the rock, and told that the victim had been transformed into the rock (Ovid, *Metap.*, ix. 226).

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Such deeds, my mother, 'gainst my father thou
Wast seen to have planned and acted, and on thee
May sternest Justice and Erinnyes swift
Inflict their vengeance, . . . if that prayer be right, . . .
And right it is, for thou the right hast scorned, 810
Murdering the noblest man of all the earth,
Of whom thou ne'er shalt see the like again.

[Exit DEIANEIRA, slowly, and despondingly.]

Chor. [To DEIANEIRA, as she goes.] Why creep'st thou
off in silence? Know'st thou not

That silence but admits the accuser's charge?

Hyllos. Let her creep off. Fair wind go with her now,
As she creeps on away from these mine eyes:
What need to vainly cherish vainest show
Of mother's name, where mother's acts are not?
No! Let her go, in God's name, and the joy
She gives my father, may it fall on her. [Exit. 820]

STROPHE I

Chor. See, O ye maidens fair,
How even now there comes upon our view
The word of augury,
Sprung from high foresight in the days of old,
Which said the earing-tide
Of the twelfth year should come in cycle full,¹
And bring the son of Zeus a rest from toil;
And now, with prosperous breeze,
It speeds unto its end;
For how can he, who sees no more the light,
Still serve in tasks of toil? 830

ANTISTROPHE I

For if the Kentaur's craft
Wraps him, resistless, in dark cloud of death,

¹ Deianeira had dwelt on the oracle which promised a great change after an absence of fifteen months. The Chorus looks back to an earlier prediction given twelve years before.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

While the thick venom melts,
Which death brought forth and spotted dragon fed,
How can he see the light
Of other day than this,
*Wasting away with hydra's earful spell,
While, still in varied forms,
The subtly working pangs
Of him, the beast with rough and swarthy mane, 840
Torture with fiercest heat ?

STROPHE II

And she, ill-starred one, seeing a great wrong
Rush with no lingering on her hearth and home,
From new-formed marriage ties
Gave but small heed to what had passed of old,
Nor what had come from stranger's counsel false,
With issues of dread doom.
Full sure she now bewails,
Full sure she weeps fresh dew of plenteous tears ;
And Fate, in onward course,
Brings forth a subtle, great calamity. 850

ANTISTROPHE II

It bursts full stream, the fountain of hot tears ;
The plague (oh, heavens !) spreads over every limb,
The like of which from foes
Ne'er came to vex the far-famed son of Zeus.
Ah ! the dark point of champion's foremost spear,
Which then bore off the bride,
Won by the right of war,
From high Œchia's peaks ! while dumbly working
She who o'er Kypros reigns,
Is seen the mighty doer of the whole. 860
1st Maiden. Am I deceived, or do I hear indeed
The sound of wailing coming from the house ?
What shall I say ?

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

2nd Maiden. No doubtful voice I hear,
But miserable, wailing cry within ;
And, lo ! our house is on the eve of change.

Enter Nurse.

3rd Maiden. Look then on her who comes with tight-
drawn brow,
Old and in sorrow, as with news to tell. 870

Nurse. Oh, girls ! No little evil has it caused,
That fatal gift she sent to Heracles.

Chor. Oh, full of years ! What new deed tell'st thou of ?

Nurse. Moving no step has Deianeira gone
The very last of all her ways on earth.

Chor. Thou dost not speak of death ?

Nurse. My tale is told.

Chor. And is she dead ?

Nurse. Again thou hearest it.

Chor. Poor doomed one, and how was it that she died ?

Nurse. In way most piteous.

Chor. With what death, I pray ? 880

Nurse. She slew herself.

Chor. What madness or disease

With blow of deadly weapon slew her too ?

And how, alone, none with her, did she thus

Add death to death ?

Nurse. With stroke of ruthless blade.

Chor. And did'st thou see, O babbler, this foul deed ?

Nurse. I saw it clear, as standing close at hand.

Chor. What was it ? Tell, I pray. 890

Nurse. With her own hands

She did the deed.

Chor. What say'st thou ?

Nurse. Things too clear.

Chor. Truly this new-found bride
Brings forth, brings forth to those who dwell with us
A great calamity.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Nurse. Too great indeed, and had'st thou stood and
seen

What things she did thou would'st have pitied her.

[*Chor.* And could a woman's hand cause woe so great ?

Nurse. 'Twas dreadful : but thy witness thou shalt
bear,

Hearing my tale, that I have told the truth ;]

For when she came alone within the house,

And saw her son, within the palace courts,

A hollowed couch preparing, that he might

Go back to meet his father, she, concealed

Where none might see her, on the altar fell,

And wailed aloud that they were desolate,

And wept, poor wretch, still touching household things

Which use had made familiar. Wandering round,

Now here, now there, throughout her dwelling-place,

If she perchance some faithful servant saw,

The poor soul wept, as she did look on them,

Still calling out upon her evil fate,

Her future lot of utter childlessness :

And when this ceased, I see her suddenly

Rush wildly to the bed of Heracles,

And I, close hidden, with a secret eye,

Watched her, and saw her lay the coverlet

Outspread upon the couch of Heracles ;

And when this ended, leaping in, she sat,

Just in the very centre of the bed :

And weeping scalding tide of many tears,

Thus spake she : " Ah, my bridal bower, and bed,

Henceforth, farewell ; for never more shall ye

Receive me in this couch a slumberer."

And, saying this, with eager hand she loosed

Her robe, where golden buckle fastened it

Below her breast, and tore the garment off

From her left arm and bosom. And I ran

With all my strength to tell her son of this

900

910

920

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

That she was doing. While we went and came,
We saw that she had struck with two-edged blade 930
Below the heart and bosom, and her son
Saw it, and groaned. For well he knew, poor wretch,
That he, in wrath, had driven her on to this,
Learning too late from those that are within
That she against her will had done the deed,
Led to it by the Kentaur. And her son,
In deepest woe, ceased not to pour lament,
Wailing her fate, nor yet to kiss her lips,
But, falling side by side, he lay and groaned,
That he had falsely brought a charge of guilt 940
Against her, wailing that he now was left,
Of father and of mother both bereaved.
So stand things there ; and if one dares to count
On two short days, or more, vain fool is he ;
The morrow is as nought, till one has passed
The present day in fair prosperity. [Exit.

STROPHE I

Chor. Which shall I wail for first ?
Which sorrow goes furthest in woe ?
Hard question is this to decide,
For me at least in my grief.

ANTISTROPHE I

One evil we see close at hand, 950
And one we await in our fear :
And whether we see or await,
The sorrow is equal in both.

STROPHE II

Would that some blast of the winds
Might rise with fair gale on our hearth,
And carry me far from these climes,
That I might not die in my fear,
At the sight of this strong son of Zeus.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

For, lo ! they say that he comes
To his home in pain none can heal,
A marvel of infinite woe.

960

ANTISTROPHE II

Near, close at hand, not far off,
I wailed, as a nightingale sad ;
Dread steps of strangers draw nigh.
And how do they bear him ? They come,
As mourning a friend, with hushed tread ;
Silently so is he borne.
Ah, must we deem him as dead,
Or has he fallen asleep ?

970

*Enter HYLLOS, Elder, and Others, bearing HERACLES
on a couch.*

Hyllos. Ah me ! ah me, O my father !
Ah me, for thee in my woe !
What must I suffer, ah me !
What shall I counsel or plan ?

Elder. Hush, my son ! lest thou stir
Thy sore-vexed father's woe ;
Still lives he, though he lies
Thus prostrate on his couch :
Hush ! bite thy lips ; be still.

Hyllos. How say'st thou ? Doth he live ?

Elder. Wake him not, plunged in sleep ;
Move him not, lest thou rouse,
O boy, the dreaded scourge,
That drives him in frenzy of soul.

980

Hyllos. Yea ; but on me, in my woe,
Presses a boundless grief ;
Wildly my spirit swells.

Hera. [*Waking.*] Zeus ! In what land am I ?
On whose coasts lie, laid low
In anguish nought can soothe ?

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Ah ! once more the dire pest
Gnaws the heart's inmost core.

Elder. [*To HYLLOS.*] Did'st thou not know what gain
Lies in restraining speech,
Not driving sleep from his eyes ?

990

Hyllos. And yet, beholding this,
How could I hold my peace ?

Hera. O thou Kenæan rock,
Where altars crown the height,
What thanks for what great gifts
Hast thou, O Zeus, wrought out
For me in my great woe !
What, ah ! what great hurt
Hast thou appointed me !
Would that thou ne'er had'st met
These eyes of mine, to see

This crown of frenzy none have power to soothe !
What charmer, what skilled leech,
Less than great Zeus himself,
Will soothe this direst woe ?
Far off is that wonder to see.

1000

Ah ! ah !

Leave me to sleep, yes, leave me, wretched one ;
Leave me to sleep my sleep.
Where dost thou touch me ? Where move ?
Death thou wilt bring ; yea, bring death.
What awhile knew repose
Now thou dost stir again ;
It grasps me, creeping still.

Where are ye, of all men that live on the earth most
ungrateful ?

1010

For whom I of old, in all forests and seas, slaying monsters,
Wore out my life ; and now, when I lie sore smitten
before you,
Not one of you all will bring the fire or the sword that
will help me.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Ah me ! will no one come,
And, smiting my head, put a stop
To this weary struggle of life ?
Ah ! woe is me ! Woe is me !

Elder. O boy, that art this hero's son, the task
Goes far beyond my strength. Do thou take part ; *
Thy hand is stronger far than mine to save.

Hyllos. I lay my hand upon him, but to grant 1020
A life that shall forget its toil and pain,
This neither from mine own nor others' help
Is mine to work. Zeus only giveth that.

Hera. Ah, boy ! Where art thou, boy ?
Lift me a little. This way, this way prop.

Ah ! O ye Heavens !
Again it seizes, seizes in dread strength,
To the grave bringing low,
The fierce disease no healing skill may reach. 1030
O Pallas ! Pallas ! yet again it stings.

Have pity, my son, on thy father ; strike with a sword
none will blame ;
Strike me under the neck, and heal the pain which she
wrought,
Thy mother, goddess in guilt. Ah, may I see her brought
low,

Slain, yea, as thus she slays !
O Hades, kind and sweet, 1040
Twin-born brother of Zeus,
Lull me, lull me to sleep,
With fate that brooks no delay,
Smiting the man worn with woe.

Chor. I shudder, as I hear, my friends, the griefs
With which our king, being what he is, is vexed.

Hera. Ah me ! full many labours hard to tell,
Many and fierce, with hand and strength of back
Have I wrought out. And ne'er the wife of Zeus
Such task assigned, nor yet Eurystheus harsh,

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

As did that child of Ceneus, steeped in guile, 1050
Casting around my shoulders such a net,
Erinnys-woven, that has wrought my death ;
For, cleaving to my side, it eats within,
Consuming all my flesh, and from my lungs,
Still winding in, it drains my arteries,
Drinks the warm blood, and I am done to death,
My whole frame bound with this unheard of chain ;
And never yet did host on battle-plain,
Nor earth-born troop of Giants, nor the might
Of savage beasts, nor Hellas, nor the land
Of men that speak not,¹ nor the regions vast 1060
I traversed clearing, work a deed like this :
But she, a woman, woman-like in mind,
Not of man's strength, alone, without a sword,
She has destroyed me ; and do thou, my son,
Prove thyself truly mine, and honour not
Thy mother's name henceforward more than mine ;
But thou thyself with thine own hands from home
To my hands bring her, that I thus may know
If thou dost mourn my sorrow more than hers,
When thou shalt see her body maimed and shamed
In righteous judgment. Come, my son, be bold,
And pity me, in all ways pitiable, 1070
Who, like a girl must weep and shriek in pain ;
And yet there lives not one who, ere it came,
Could say that he had seen this man thus act,
But ever I bore pain without a groan ;
Yet now with this I grow a woman weak.
And now, come thou, and near thy father stand,
And see by what strange chance I suffer this ;
For I will show what lies below these wraps :
Come, all of you, behold this wretched frame,

¹ The "land of men that speak not" is simply that of the non-Hellenic races, whose speech seemed to the Greeks inarticulate as the chirping of choughs or swallows.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Behold me, how I suffer piteously.

1080

Ah, miserable me !

Again the dart of pain is fever-hot,
And rushes through my breast. This cursed ill,
So seems it, will not leave me unassailed,
Still eating on. O Hades, king, receive me ;
Smite me, O flash of Zeus ; yea, shake, O king,
Yea, father, dart thy thunderbolts on me ;
For now once more it eats, it grows, it spreads.

O hands, my hands ! O back, and chest, and arms

1090

That once were dear, there lie ye now who once

Subdued by force the Nemean habitant,

The lion, troubler of the flocks and herds,

A monster none might war with or approach ;

And that Lernæan hydra, and the host

Of Kentaur's, all of double form, half-horse,

Fearful, and fierce, and lawless, strong and proud,

The beast of Erymanthos, and the dog

Of deepest Hades, with the triple head,

A portent awful ; and the dreaded shape

Of that fierce serpent, and the dragon guard

That at the world's end watched the golden fruit ;

1100

And thousand other toils I tasted of,

And no man raised his trophies over me ;

But now thus jointless, worn to rags and shreds,

By plague obscure I waste away in woe,

Who from a noble mother took my name,

Reputed son of Zeus the star-girt king :

But know this well, that though I be as nought,

As nothing creep, yet, even as I am,

I will smite her who brought me to this pass.

Let her but come that she may learn, and tell

1110

That I, or dead or living, punished guilt.

Chor. Oh, wretched Hellas ! what a weight of woe

Do I foresee if it shall lose this man !

Hyllos. Since thou, my father, lett'st me answer thee,

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

By this thy silence, hear in spite of pain,
 For I will ask what 'tis but right to grant.
 Give me thyself, not such as when thy wrath
 Stings thee to frenzy ; else thou shalt not know
 In what thou wrongly seekest to rejoice,
 In what thou wrongly grieveest.

Hera. Say thy say,
 And hold thy peace. I nothing understand, 1120
 In this my pain, of all thy glozing speech.

Hyllos. I come to tell thee of my mother's plight,
 And how she sinned, yet most unwillingly.

Hera. Vilest of all the vile, and hast thou dared
 To speak of her, thy murd'ress mother, to me ?

Hyllos. So stands the case that silence would be wrong.

Hera. True, it were wrong, with all those sins of hers.

Hyllos. Thou wilt not speak thus of this day's offence.

Hera. Speak ; but look to it, lest thou too prove base.

Hyllos. I speak, then. She is dead, but now laid
 low. 1130

Hera. By whom ? Strange portent tell'st thou with ill
 words.

Hyllos. By her own hand : no other struck the blow.

Hera. Ah me ! Ere I could slay her as was meet ?

Hyllos. Even thy wrath would melt, did'st thou know
 all.

Hera. Dread is thy preface, yet tell out thy tale.

Hyllos. In one short word, she sinned, desiring good.

Hera. Did she do good, thou vile one, slaying me ?

Hyllos. Thinking to send a charm to win thy love,
 When she thy new bride saw, she missed her aim. [1140

Hera. And what Trachinian boasts such skill in charms ?

Hyllos. Nessos, of old, the Kentaur, counselled her
 With such a spell to kindle thy desire.

Hera. Ah me ! ah me ! I die in wretchedness ;
 I perish, perish : light is gone from me.

Woe ! woe ! I see what issue we have reached.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS.

Come, O my child ; thy father is no more :
Call thou all those that name thee brother here,
And call the poor Alcmena (all in vain
The bride of Zeus) that ye may hear, and learn
The last of all the oracles I know.

1150

Hyllos. Thy mother is not here, for so it chanced;
She dwelleth now on Tiryns' further shore ;
And of thy children some she rears with her,
And some, know thou, dwell under Theban towers.
But we, my father, that are present here,
Will hear and do whatever thou shalt bid.

Hera. Hear then what presses. Thou hast reached an
age

When thou must show what mould of man thou art,
That thou art called my son. For, lo ! to me
Long since it was revealed of my Sire
That I should die by hand of none that live,
But one, who dead, had dwelt in Hades dark ;
And thus the Kentaur-monster, as was shown,
Though dead, hath slain me who till now did live ;
And I will show to thee new prophecies,
Following on these, agreeing with the old,
Which I, within the grove the Selli own,¹
Who haunt the hills, and sleep upon the earth,
Wrote down from that tall oak of many tongues,
To Zeus, my father, sacred. And it said
That in the time that liveth, and now is,
Should come the end of labours. And I thought
That all would prosper ; yet it meant nought else
Than this my death, for unto those that die
No labour comes. And now since this has come,
Most clearly, O my son, 'tis meet for thee
To come as helper to this sufferer here,

1160

1170

¹ The Selli are described by Homer (*Il.* xvi. 233) as hermit-prophets, dwelling around the Pelasgic shrine of Dodona, and interpreting the oracles which came from the sacred oak.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

And not by lingering make my speech more sharp,
But yielding, working with me, finding thus
Thy noblest law, thy father to obey.

Hyllos. I dread, my father, bandying words with thee,
And will obey in all thou thinkest right. 1190

Hera. Give me thy right hand then as surest pledge.

Hyllos. To what end turnest thou an oath so dread?

Hera. Wilt thou not give it, and obey my voice?

Hyllos. Lo, then, I give it, and will gainsay nought.

Hera. Swear by the head of Zeus who gave me life.

Hyllos. Swear to do what? Shall that be told me too?

Hera. That thou wilt do the work I set on thee.

Hyllos. So swear I, calling Zeus to bind the oath.

Hera. Pray thou that thou may'st suffer if thou fail.

Hyllos. I shall not suffer, for I'll act; yet still,
I pray as thou dost bid me. 1190

Hera. Thou dost know

The topmost peak of Æta, claimed by Zeus?

Hyllos. Right well, for there I oft have sacrificed.

Hera. There thou must bear my body, thou thyself,
With friends whom thou may'st wish for, and must
pluck

Full many a branch of deeply-rooted oak,
And many a male wild olive,¹ and on them
Place this my body, and then, taking fire
Of pine-wood torch, must burn it. Let no tear
Of wailing enter in, but do thy deed,
If thou art mine, without or tear or groan; 1200
Or else, though I be in the grave, my curse
Shall rest upon thee, grievous evermore.

Hyllos. What say'st thou, O my father? Woe is me,
That thou hast thus dealt with me!

¹ Oak, because it was from that tree at Dodona that the prediction of his death had come; wild olive, because that was sacred to Heracles, as having been brought by him from the land of the Hyperboreans (Pind. *Ol.* iv. 13).

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Hera. I have said
What thou must do, or nevermore be called
My son, but seek another father for thee.
Hyllos. Ah me ! once more. And dost thou bid me,
father,

To be thy slayer and thy murderer ?

Hera. Not so bid I ; but of the ills I bear,
To be the one great healer, strong to save.

Hyllos. And how can I work health by burning thee ?

Hera. If this thou fearest, do at least the rest. [1210

Hyllos. I shall not grudge to bear thy body there.

Hera. And wilt thou heap the pyre I bade thee heap ?

Hyllos. All but the touching it with these my hands :
In all things else my labour shall not fail.

Hera. That, then, shall be enough. But add for me
One little favour to these greater ones.

Hyllos. Though it be very great, it shall be done.

Hera. Thou knowest that maiden, child of Eurytos ?

Hyllos. Thou speakest, so I guess, of Iole ? 1220

Hera. E'en so. And this I charge thee, O my son,
When I am dead, if thou wilt reverence show,
Be mindful of the oath thou now hast sworn,
And take her as thy wife.¹ Rebel thou not ;
Nor let another take, instead of thee,
One who has clung so closely to my side ;
But thou thyself, my son, make her thy wife.
Obey me, for to trust in greater things,
And then, in small, distrust, this cancels quite
The former boon.

Hyllos. [*Aside.*] Ah me ! To vent one's wrath
On one so vexed is wrong. Yet who can bear
To see him in this mood ? 1230

¹ Revolting as this element in the drama is to our feelings, the thought which seems to underlie it is, that the coming apotheosis of Heracles removed him from the normal conditions of human life, and cancelled the relationship which, even to the Greek mind, would have made such a union horrible.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Hera. Thou speakest then
As meaning not to do the things I say.

Hyllos. Nay, who could choose a wife who guilty
stands,

She, and she only, of my mother's death,
And that thou, father, art as now thou art ?
Who could do this, unless the fiends had laid
The spell of madness on him ? Better 'twere
For me to die, my father, than to live
With worst foes dwelling.

Hera. This boy, it seems, denies
What I in death have asked for. But a curse
From God awaits thee, if thou disobey. 1240

Hyllos. Too soon, 'twould seem, thou 'lt shew how wild
thou art.

Hera. Yes ; thou hast roused me when the ill was
lulled.

Hyllos. Woe's me ! I stand as one in much perplexed.

Hera. Yes, for thou dar'st thy father disobey.

Hyllos. But must I learn, my father, godless deeds ?

Hera. No godless deed, if so thou glad my heart.

Hyllos. And dost thou bid me do it in full earnest ?

Hera. Yea, even so ; I call the Gods to witness.

Hyllos. Then will I do, as in the sight of God,
What thou dost ask, and will refuse no more ;
I shall not shew as base, obeying thee. 1250

Hera. Thou endest well ; and add, my son, this boon,
And quickly, ere some fresh convulsive throb
Or dart of pain comes on me, place me there,
Upon the pyre. Come quick, and lift me up.
This is his rest who lies before you here,
His last, last end.

Hyllos. Nay, nothing hinders now
Our doing this, since thou, my father, bidd'st,
And so constrainest us to do thy will.

Hera. Come then, ere once again

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

The evil stirs in its might.
Come, heart strong to restrain,
Putting a curb on thy lips,
Wrought of the steel and the stone.

1280

Cease from thy wailing, as one
About to accomplish a task
Unwelcome, yet fruitful in joy.
Farewell, friends, faithful and true,

76

*Grant me your pardon for this ;
*But the Gods . . . oh pardon them not,
*For the deeds that are ever being done,
Who, being and bearing the name
Of Fathers, look on such wrong.

1290

Chor. What cometh no man may know,
What is is piteous for us,
Base and shameful for Them,
And for him who endureth this woe,
Above all that live hard to bear.

Hyllos. [*To Chorus.*] And thou, O maiden, within,
Fail not in aught that is right,
Seeing great and terrible deaths,
Many and strange forms of woe,
And nothing which Zeus works not.

AIAS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ATHENA.

ODYSSEUS.

AIAS.

TECMESSA, wife of AIAS.

TEUCROS, half-brother of AIAS.

MENELAOS.

AGAMEMNON.

EURYSAKES, son of AIAS.

Attendant.

Herald.

Chorus of Sailors from Salamis.

ARGUMENT.—*Aias, the son of Telamon and Eribæa, was mighty among the heroes whom Agamemnon led against Troia, giant-like in stature and in strength; and in the pride of his heart he waxed haughty, and scorned the help of the Gods, and turned away from Pallas Athena when she would have protected him, and so provoked her wrath. Now when Achilles died, and it was proclaimed that his armour should be given to the bravest and best of all the host, Aias claimed them as being indeed the worthiest, and as having rescued the corpse of Achilles from shameful wrong. But the armour (so Athena willed) was given by the chief of the Hellenes not to him but to Odysseus, and, being very wroth thereat, he sought to slay the Atreidæ who had so wronged him, and would have so done, had not Athena darkened his eyes, and turned him against the flocks and herds of the host.*¹

¹ The first outline of the story is found in the *Odyssey* (xi. 543), where Odysseus relates how even in Hades the soul of Aias dwelt apart, and when it recognised him, deigned not to answer him a word, but turned back haughtily to the darkness.

A I A S

SCENE.—*Tents of Aias on the shore, near Ilion; a low underwood in the background; and the sea seen in the distance*

Athena. [*Speaking as from the sky, unseen by ODYSSEUS.*]
I see thee, son of Lartios, ever more
Seeking to seize some moment of attack
Against thy foes; and now, I find thee here,
Where by the ships the tents of Aias are,
(His ranks the last in order,)¹ hunting out
And measuring the steps but newly stamped,
That thou may'st see if he is now within,
Or stays without. And thou art onward led,
As by the scent of keen Laconian hound;²
For there, within, the man may now be found,
With drops of sweat on head and slaughtering hands;¹⁰
And thou no longer needest so to peer
Within the gate; but tell me why thou show'st
Such zeal, that thou may'st learn from one who knows.

Odys. O voice, of all Divine Ones dear to me,
Athena's, clear, though Thou remain unseen,
I hear thy speech, and catch it in my soul
As though it were some bronze Tyrsenian³ trump;

¹ The tents of Odysseus, as described in the *Iliad* (xi 3), were in the centre of the crescent-shore, between Sigeion and Rhæteion, those of Aias and Achilles at the two extremities.

² The dogs of Sparta, and specially those of Taygetos, were proverbial for their speed and keenness of scent from the days of Pindar (*Fr.* 83) to those of Virgil (*Georg.* iv. 405).

³ The Tyrsenians, or Tyrrhenians (identified here with the Etrurians), had the repute of being the first inventors of bronze, and the trumpet so named had a wide, bell-shaped mouth. *Comp. Æsch. Eumen.* 567.

AIAS

And now full clear Thou saw'st me wheeling round
 My steps against a man I count my foe,
 Aias, the bearer of the mighty shield.¹
 For he it is, and no one else, that I
 Long while have tracked; for he this very night
 Hath wrought a work mysterious, if indeed
 'Tis he hath done it, for as yet we know
 Nought clearly, but are wandering in our search.
 And I of my free will have yoked myself
 To bear this toil; for 'twas but now we found
 Our captured flocks destroyed, by man's hand slain,
 And with them too the guardians of the herd;
 And every one impures the deed to him;
 And thou a scout, who saw him there alone,
 The field overleaping with a blood-stained sword,
 Told me, and showed it all. And I forthwith
 Rush on his track, and now in part I guess
 By signs and tokens, and in part am struck
 With sore amaze, and learn not where he is.
 And now Thou comest here most seasonably,
 For I, in all things past or yet to come,
 Am guided by the wisdom of thine hand.

I know it, O Odysseus, and I came,
 I on thy track, thy helper in thy hunt.

Odys. And thou, Mistress, do I toil aright?

Athena. Not so, the deeds were done by this man's

hand.

Odys. To what rash purpose stretched he forth his hand?

Athena. vexed sore about the great Achilles' arms. [⁴⁰

Odys. But why this raid upon our flocks and herds?

Athena. He thinks it is your blood that stains his hand.

Odys. What? Was his purpose against Argives aimed?

Athena. And he had done it, had I failed to watch.

Odys. Whence came this daring mood, this rashness wild?

¹ The epithet by which the son of Telamon was distinguished from the other Aias, the son of Oileus.

AIAS

Athena. 'Gainst you, by night, alone, with guile he sallies.

Odys. What? Did he come, and reach his destined spot?

Athena. Yea, at the gates of the two chiefs he stood.

Odys. And what restrained the hand that craved for blood?

Athena. I held him back from that accursed joy,
Casting strange glamour o'er his wandering eyes,
And turned him on the flocks, and where with them
The herds of captured oxen press in crowds,
Not yet divided. And on these he falls,
And wrought fell slaughter of the horned kine,
Smiting all round; and now it seemed to him
That he did slay the Atreidæ with his hand,
Now this, now that, of other generals.
And I still urged the wild and moon-struck man
With fresh access of madness, and I cast
An evil net around him. After this,
When he had ceased that slaughter, binding fast
The oxen that still lived, and all the flocks,
He leads them to his dwelling, counting them
No troop of horned cattle, but of men;
And now within he flouts his prisoners.
And I will show thee this disease full clear,
That thou may'st see and tell the Argives all.
But stay thou here, and fear not; think thou not
The man will prove an evil chance to thee;
For I will turn his eyes' clear sight aside,
And keep them back from looking on thy face.
Ho there, [To AIAS,] I bid thee come, who bindest now
The captive bands with fetters. Thee I call,
O Aias: forward, to thy dwelling's front.

Odys. What dost thou, O Athena? Call him not.

Athena. Wilt not be still, and 'scape the coward's shame?

AIAS

Odys. Nay, by the Gods ! but let him stay within.

Athena. What dost thou fear ? Was he not strong before ?

Odys. Always my foe, and more so now than ever.

Athena. Is it not sweetest scorn to scorn our foes ?

Odys. Enough for me that this man stays within. ⁸⁰

Athena. Dost fear so much to see a madman's face ?

Odys. Nay, were he sane, I should not shun him then.

Athena. Though thou be near, he will not see thee now.

Odys. How so, if he the same eyes has to see ?

Athena. Know, I will darken even clearest eyes.

Odys. When a God worketh, all is possible.

Athena. Hush, then, and stay where now thou tak'st thy stand.

Odys. I'll stay then ; yet I fain would be away.

Athena. [*To AIAS.*] Ho, there, O Aias, once again I call.

Why honourest thou so little thine ally ? ⁹⁰

Enter AIAS from his tent, with a blood-stained scourge in his hand.

Aias. Hail, O Athena, hail, O child of Zeus !

Well art Thou come, and I with golden spoils

Will deck thy shrine for this my glorious raid.

Athena. Thou speakest well. But tell me this, I pray,
Is thy sword red with blood of Argive host ?

Aias. Well may I boast, and I deny it not.

Athena. Did'st thou against the Atreidæ arm thy hand ?

Aias. Yea. Nevermore shall they do Aias wrong.

Athena. The men are dead, if I thy meaning catch.

Aias. Yea, dead ; now let them carry off my arms. ¹⁰⁰

Athena. So be it ; but that son of Lartios,
What is his plight ? Has he escaped thy hand ?

Aias. That scoundrel fox ! Dost ask me where he is ?

Athena. E'en so. I mean Odysseus, thy chief foe.

Aias. He, O my Mistress, sits a prisoner there,

AIAS

My choicest spoil. I seek not yet his death.

Athena. What wilt thou do first, what advantage gain?

Aias. First he, bound to the pillar in the court. . . .

Athena. What ill wilt thou on that poor wretch inflict?

Aias. . . . His back all bleeding with the scourge,
shall die. 110

Athena. Do not, I pray, such outrage wreak on him.

Aias. In other things, *Athena*, have thy way :

But he this penalty, nought else, shall pay.

Athena. Since this thy joy then, to it with a will :
Spare not a jot of all thy soul desires.

Aias. I go to work. And Thou, I charge Thee, still
Be with me, helper true, as now Thou art.

[Goes back to his tent.]

Athena. Thou see'st, *Odysseus*, all the might of Gods,
How great it is. Whom found'st thou than this man
With keener foresight, or with better gifts,
To do what seemed most fitting for the time? 120

Odys. I know of no man, and I pity him,
So wretched now, although mine enemy,
So tied and harnessed to an evil fate,
And thinking that it touches me as well ;
For this I see, that we, all we that live,
Are but vain phantoms, shadows fleeting fast.

Athena. Do thou, then, seeing this, refrain thy tongue
From any lofty speech against the Gods,
Nor boast thyself, though thou excel in strength
Or weight of stored-up wealth. All human things 130
A day lays low, a day lifts up again ;
But still the Gods love those of ordered soul,
And hate the evil.

Chor. I am full glad, O son of *Telamon*,¹

¹ It adds to the interest of this and many other passages of the play to remember how closely *Salamis* was identified by the Athenians with their own history. One of the Attic tribes was named after *Aias*. *Solon* of *Peisistratos* was said to have inserted a verse in the *Iliad* (ii. 558), making him an ally of the Athenians.

A I A S

Whose island home is sea-girt Salamis,
 When all is well with thee ;
 But when the stroke of Zeus, or evil speech
 Of all the Danai comes on thee full fierce,
 Then have I great dismay,
 And, like a fluttering dove, look on in fear ; 140
 For lo ! this night just o'er,
 Great clamours vex our souls,
 Sprung from the evil bruit
 That thou, upon the plain where all our steeds
 Leap wildly to and fro,
 Rushing, hast slain the Danai's spoil of flocks,
 All that was left them, taken by the spear,
 With sharp and glittering steel.
 Such whispered words of guile
 Odysseus into all men's ears doth pour,
 And men believe his speech ; 150
 For now he speaks what is too credible,
 And he who hears rejoiceth more and more
 [Than he who told the tale,]
 Mocking at these thy woes.
 For if one take his aim at lofty souls
 He scarce can miss his mark ;
 But one who should at me his slander dart,
 Would fail to gain belief ;
 For envy ever dogs the great man's steps ;
 Yet men of low estate,
 Apart from mightier ones,
 Are but poor towers of strength.
 Still with the great the mean man prospers best, 160

The noblest families of the Eupatrids claimed descent from him. Before the battle of Salamis the Athenians invoked the help of Aias and Telamon, and, after their victory, dedicated their first-fruits to the former (Herod. viii. 64, 121). So, in this tragedy, the sailors of Aias are called sons of Erechtheus, *i.e.*, Athenians (202). They crave for a sight of Athens (i. 221). Aias bids the Athenians, as well as his own people, a solemn farewell.

AIAS

And by the small the great maintains his cause;
 But those, the fools and blind,
 'Tis vain to teach by words.
 By such as these thou art beclamoured now,
 And we can naught avail,
 Apart from thee, O king, to ward the blow.
 But, since they dread thine eye, like wild birds' flock
 Fluttered with fear at sight of eagle strong,
 Perchance, should'st thou confront them suddenly,
 They, hushed and dumb, would crouch. 170

STROPHE

Was it that Artemis, the child of Zeus,¹
 Before whose Tauric altar bleed the bulls,
 (O rumour terrible! O source of shame!)
 Had sped thee forth against the people's herds,
 The oxen, shared of all?
 Was it for victory that brought no fruit?
 Or was She robbed of glorious spoils of war?
 Was it for stricken deer
 She gained no votive gifts?
 Or Enyalios,² in his coat of mail,
 Did he find cause of blame,
 As sharing war with thee,
 And so revenged his wrong 180
 In stratagems of night?

ANTISTROPHE

For never yet, O son of Telamon,

¹ In two legends of the Homeric cycle Artemis appeared as punishing scorn and slight. She sent the Calydonian boar because Eneus had not sacrificed to her (*Il.* ix. 533). She demanded the sacrifice of Iphigeneia because Agamemnon had slain a consecrated stag. The name *Tauropola* contained a twofold allusion—to Tauris, as the home of the wild, orgiastic worship paid to her, and to the bulls (*tauroi*) which were sacrificed in it.

² Enyalios, analogous in attributes to Ares, and often identified with him, was one of the tutelary deities of Salamis, and, at Athens, the Polemarch Archon offered an annual sacrifice to him and Artemis.

AIAS

Had'st thou so wandered from thy reason's path,
 Falling on flocks and herds;
 By will of Gods, perchance, the evil comes;
 But, Zeus and Phœbos, turn,
 Turn ye aside the Argives' tale of shame!
 But if the mighty kings with subtle craft
 Forge idle tales of thee,
 Or he who draws his birth
 From that pernicious stock of Sisyphos,¹
 Bear not, oh, bear not, king,
 That tale of foulest shame,
 Still looking idly thus
 Upon thy sea-washed tents.

190

EPODE

But rise from this thy seat, where all too long
 *Thou stay'st, in rest that brings the ills of strife,
 Fresh kindling Heaven's fierce wrath;
 And so the haughtiness of those thy foes
 Speeds on unshrinking as in forest glades
 Where the wind gently blows,
 While all, with chattering tongues,
 Speak words of woe and shame,
 And sorrow dwells with me.

200

Enter TECMESSA from the tent.

Tec. O ye who comrades sailed in Aias' ship,
 Sprung from the ancient race
 Who claim the old Erechtheus as their sire,²
 We, who afar from home
 Watch over him, yon child of Telamon,
 Have sorrows in good store;
 For now the dread, the great, the mighty one,

¹ In the post-Homeric legends Anticleia, the wife of Laertes, or Lartios, had been loved by Sisyphos, the craftiest of all men, before her marriage, and Odysseus was his child and not her husband's.

² "Who claim . . ." *sc.*, who are true citizens of Attica.

AIAS

Aias, with tempest wild, lies smitten sore.

Chor. What change hath night then brought

*From fair and prosperous state?

210

Child of Teleutas old, of Phrygia,

Speak thou, and tell thy tale ;

For mighty Aias loves and honours thee,

His captive and his bride : *

Thou wilt not speak as one that knoweth not.

Tec. How shall I speak what is unspeakable ?

For thou wilt learn a sorrow sharp as death :

Our Aias, noble, brave,

His soul to madness stung,

Was brought to shame this night.

Such slaughter wrought by him,

His victims dripping blood,

May'st thou behold i' the tent.

220

Chor. Ah, what the news thou bring'st

Of him the fiery one,

Intolerable, and yet inevitable,

By the great Danai's chiefs spread far and wide,

Which rumour magnifies.

Ah me ! the fate that cometh on I fear ;

Our chief will die the gazing-stock of all,

Having, with frenzied hand

And dark and glittering sword,

230

Slaughtered the oxen's herd

And those that kept the steeds.

Tec. Ah me ! Thence, thence he came,

Bringing the flock in chains ;

Of part upon the ground he cut the throats,

Part asunder he smote,

Through the chine cleaving them :

And taking two white-footed rams,

From one he cuts the head,

And tears out its tongue from the roots ;

And one to a column he binds,

240

A I A S

And seizing a driver's rein,
He smites with shrill re-echoing, doubled thong,
Venting vile words of shame,
Which God, not man, had taught.

Chor. Now is it time one should hide

One's face in the shrouding veil,
And stealthily creep out of sight,
Or sitting on swift rower's bench,
Give way to the sea-crossing ship ;

250

Such are the threats the Atreidæ ply in their wrath,
And I fear, lest smitten with him,
Whom a terrible fate holds fast,
I suffer, like him, stoned to death.

Tec. 'Tis so no more ; for like the wild south-west,
Without the lightning's flash,
He now is lulled to rest ;
And now, in his right mind,
New form of grief is his ;

260

For to look out on ills that are one's own,
In which another's hand has had no share,
'This bringeth sharpest woe.

Chor. If he has rest he sure will prosper well.

Slight count we make of ills already gone.

Tec. Which would'st thou choose, if one should give
thee choice,

Or vexing friends, thyself to feel delight,
Or sharing common griefs to mourn with them ?

Chor. The double evil, lady, is the worse.

Tec. We then, though mad no longer, suffer more.

Chor. How say'st thou this ? I know not what thou
say'st.

270

Tec. That man, when he was in his dire disease,
Himself rejoiced in all the ills he did,
But vexed our souls that reason still obeyed ;
But now, when lulled and calmed from that attack,
He is sore haunted with a troublous grief,

AIAS

And we with him are suffering nothing less.
Have we not here a twofold ill for one ?

Chor. I own it also, and I fear lest stroke
Smite him from God. How else, if he, though cured,
Is just as far from joy as when diseased ? 280

Tec. So stands it, and 'tis right that thou should'st
know.

Chor. How did the evil first swoop down on him ?
Tell it to us who grieve at thy mischance.

Tec. Thou shalt learn all, as one who shares our woe :
For he, at dead of night, when evening's lamps
No longer burnt, his two-edged sword in hand,
Sought to go out along the lonely paths ;
And I rebuke him, saying, "What is this
'Thou dost, O Aias ? Why unbidden go
On this thy emprise, nor by the heralds called,
Nor hearing voice of trump ? Lo ! all the host 290
Is sleeping sound." And he, with fewest words,
The well-worn saw, made answer, "Woman, know
That silence is a woman's noblest part."

And, hearing this, I ceased. Then he alone
Rushed forth, and what passed there I cannot tell :
But then he came within, and brought with him
Oxen, and shepherd-dogs, and fleecy flocks.
Some he beheaded, some he clove in twain,
Cutting their throats, and some, fast bound in chains,
He mocked, as they were men, upon the flocks
Venting his fury ; and, at last, he rushed 300
Out through the door, and with a phantom there
He bandied words, against the Atreidæ some,
And some against Odysseus, laughing much
That he had paid them to the full in scorn ;
And thence once more within the tent he leapt,
And, long while after, scarce regains his sense.
And when he saw the tent with slaughter filled,
He smote his head and groaned : and, falling down,

AIAS

He sat among the fallen carcasses
 Of that great slaughter of the flocks and herds,
 Tearing his hair by handfuls with his nails. 310
 And for a long, long time he speechless sat ;
 And then with those dread words he threatened me,
 Unless I told him all the woeful chance,
 And asked me of the plight in which he stood ;
 And I, my friends, in terror told him all,
 All that I knew of all that he had done.
 And he forthwith cried out a bitter cry,
 Such as till now I never heard from him ;
 For ever did he hold such loud lament,
 Sure sign of one with coward heart and base ; 320
 And holding back from shrill and wailing cries,
 Would groan with deep, low muttering, like a bull :
 But now, thus fallen on an evil chance,
 Tasting nor food, nor drink, among the herds
 Slain with the sword, he sits in silent calm,
 And looks like one on some dire mischief bent.
 [Such are the words he utters, such his grief.]
 But ye, my friends, (for therefore came I forth,)
 Come in, and give us help, if help ye can.
 For men like him still yield to words of friends. 330

Chor. Dread things, Tecmessa, old Teleutas' child,
 Thou tell'st us, that our chief is mad with woe.

Aias. [*Within the tent.*] Woe, woe is me !

Tec. Yet more, 'twould seem ; or heard ye not the cry
 Which Aias just now uttered ?

Aias. [*Within.*] Woe is me !

Chor. O chief, it seems, is either frenzied now,
 Or grieving o'er the frenzies of the past.

Aias. [*Within.*] My son, my son !

Tec. Ah wretched me ! he calls, Eurysakes, 340
 For thee. What means he ? Where art thou ? Ah me !

Aias. [*Within.*] I call for Teucros. Will he evermore
 Go forth to spoil while I am perishing ?

AIAS

Chor. He now seems calm enough. But ope the door ;
Perchance some sense of shame may come on him,
Seeing even me.

Tec. [*Throwing the tent door open, and disclosing AIAS
sitting with carcasses of sheep and oxen round
him.*] Behold I open it,
And thou may'st see his deeds, and how he fares.

Aias. Ah, sailor friends! alone of all my friends, ³⁵⁰
Alone abiding in your steadfast law,
Behold how great a surge of blood-flecked foam
Now whirls around me.

Chor. [*To TECMESSA.*] Ah me! Thou dost too true a
witness bear :
His deeds show clearly that his sense is gone.

Aias. O race, well versed in all the sailor's art,
Who camest, plying still the seaman's oar,
Thee, thee alone I see as help in grief; ³⁶⁰
Yet . . . kill me, kill, I pray.

Chor. Hush! speak not so, nor, curing ill with ill,
Make sorrow's weight yet greater than it is.

Aias. Me, the bold, the brave-hearted,
Fearless in fight with the foe,
Thou see'st me show the prowess of mine hand
On beasts unformidable.
Ah! woe is me for the shame,
The scorn that falls on me.

Tec. Ah, my lord Aias, speak not thus, I pray.

Aias. Away with thee! What? Wilt thou not with-
draw? ³⁷⁰

Ai! ai!

Tec. Oh! by the Gods, give way, and be advised.

Aias. Ah! woe is me, who let the cursed ones
Slip from my hands, and falling on the herds
Of horned oxen, and those noble flocks,
Shed their dark gore.

Chor. Whydost thou grieve o'er what is gone and past?

AIAS

These things are so, and cannot be undone.

Aias. O thou whose eye sees all things evermore,
Tool of all evil, child of Lartios, 380
Of all the host the foulest scoundrel-knave,
Surely thou laughest much in thy delight.

Chor. It is through God that man or laughs or mourns.

Aias. Would I could see him, smitten as I am.
Ah me! ah me!

Chor. Speak nothing vauntingly.
Dost thou not see what evil plight thou'rt in?

Aias. O Zeus! great Father of my sires of old,¹
Would that I might destroy
That crafty, scoundrel foe,
And those two kings that reign in partnership, 390
And then myself might die.

Tec. When thou pray'st this, pray that I die with thee :
What profits it to live, when thou art dead?

Aias. O dark, thou art my light,
O gloom to me most clear,
Take me, yea, take me as your habitant :
Take me, for neither to the race of Gods,
Nor yet of men enduring but a day 400
Can I, as worthy, look
For any help in need,
But She, the child of Zeus,
Goddess of mightiest power,
Mocks at me unto death ;
Where from her presence 'scape,
Where wandering shall I dwell ?
*Ah, friends ! if all things fail,
*For me, and those most near,
And we a dream pursue,
Then should the host, as spear by both hands swayed,
Smite me with one fell stroke.

¹ Æacos, the grandfather of Aias, was the son of Zeus and Ægina.

AIAS

Less mighty deeds, am left to perish here,
 Dishonoured by the Argives : yet I think 440
 I know thus much, that had Achilles lived
 To give his arms as prize of valiant deeds,
 No one would then have seized them in my stead.
 But now the Atreidæ got them for a man
 Crafty in soul, and this my strength despised ;
 And were it not my eyes and mind had rushed
 Wildly away from will, they had not lived
 To give their votes against another man.
 But now the virgin child of Zeus, with eyes 450
 Of fearful brightness, when I stretched my hands
 Against them, sent a frenzied madness on me,
 So that I stained my hands with these poor beasts ;
 And they, escaped in safety, mock at me :
 Not with my will was this, but if a God
 Should smite, the worse may 'scape the better man.
 And now what course is right for me, to whom
 The Gods are clearly foes, and all the host
 Of Hellas hates me, and these outspread plains
 And Troïa are mine enemies ? Shall I,
 Quitting my seat and sea-side anchorage,
 Leave the Atreidæ by themselves alone, 460
 And cross the Ægean waters to my home ?
 But then, how shall I look him in the face,
 My father Telamon ? How will he bear
 To see me stript, without my valour's prize,
 When he himself won glory's noblest crown ?
 That shame is past all bearing. Shall I go
 Against the Troïans' fort, and fighting there,
 Alone with them alone, do some brave deed,
 And then at last gain death ? But thus should I
 Gladden my foes, the Atreidæ. Nay, not so :
 I must seek out some perilous emprise, 470
 To show my father that I sprang from him,
 In nature not faint-hearted. It is shame

AIAS

For any man to wish for length of life,
 Who, wrapt in troubles, knows no change for good.
 For what delight brings day still following day,
 Or bringing on, or putting off our death ?
 I would not rate that man as worth regard
 Whose fervour glows on vain and empty hopes :
 But either noble life or noble death
 Becomes the gently born. My say is said. 480

Chor. And none will say, O Aias, that thou speak'st
 As one who talks by rôle, but from thine heart :
 Yet cease, we pray thee ; leave such thoughts as these,
 And let thy friends control thy soul's resolve.

Tec. My master Aias, greater ill is none
 To mortals given than lot of servitude ;
 And I was sprung from free-born father, strong,
 If any was in Phrygia, in his wealth :
 And now I am a slave, for so it pleased
 The Gods and thy right hand ; and therefore, since 490
 I share thy bed, I care for thee and thine.
 And now I pray, by Zeus who guards our hearth,
 And by the couch where thou hast slept with me,
 Deem it not right, in bondage leaving me,
 That I should hear hard words from those thy foes ;
 For should'st thou die, and dying leave me lone,
 Be sure that I upon that self-same day,
 Dragged by the Argives with a harsh constraint,
 With this thy son must eat a bond-slave's bread ;
 And some one of my masters bitter words 500
 Will speak with scorn,—“ Behold the concubine
 Of Aias who excelled the host in might !
 What bondage now she bears, in place of lot
 That all did envy ! ” This will some one say,
 And Fate pursue me, while for thee and thine
 Are basest words like these. For very shame
 Leave not thy father in his sad old age ;
 For shame leave not thy mother, feeble grown

AIAS

With many years, who oft-times prays the Gods
That thou may'st live and to thy home return :
Pity, O king, thy boy, and think if he,
Deprived of childhood's nurture, live bereaved,
Beneath unfriendly guardians, what sore grief
'Thou, in thy death, dost give to him and me ;
For I have nothing now on earth save thee
To which to look ; for thou hast swept away
My country with thy spear, and other fate
Has taken both my mother and my sire
To dwell, as dead, in Hades. What to me
Were country in thy stead, or what were wealth ?
For I in thee find all deliverance.

510

Yea, think of me too. Still the good man feels,
Or ought to feel, the memory of delight ;
For gracious favours still do favour win ;
But if a man forget the good received,
His soul no more wears stamp of gentle birth.

520

Chor. I would, O Aias, thou could'st pity feel,
As I do. 'Then would'st thou approve her words.

Aias. Great praise shalt she have from me, if she dare
Fully to do the task appointed her.

Tec. Lo ! Aias dear, I will obey in all.

Aias. Bring then thy child to me that I may see
him.

530

Tec. In very fear but now I sent him forth.

Aias. In these late troubles ? Or what meanest thou ?

Tec. Lest he, poor child, should meet with thee and
die.

Aias. That would have been fit pastime for my Fate.

Tec. But I took care against that fate to guard.

Aias. I praise thy deed, and prudence which thou
showed'st.

Tec. What service then could I next render thee ?

Aias. Give me to speak with him, and look on him.

Tec. He is hard by, in our attendants' care.

AIAS

Aias. Why this delay ? Why comes he not at once ? 540

Tec. Ho, boy ! Thy father calls. Come hither, thou,
Who chancest now to guide him with thy hands.

Aias. Speak'st thou to one who comes, or fails to hear ?

Tec. Behold, this servant brings him in to thee.

Enter Attendant, bringing EURYSAKES.

Aias. Lift him, then, lift him here. He will not shrink,
Beholding all this slaughter newly wrought,
If he be rightly named his father's son :
But we to these his father's savage ways
Must break him in, and make him like in soul.
O boy, may'st thou be happier than thy sire, 550
In all things else be like him. And not bad
Would'st thou be then. And yet thy lot e'en now
Doth move my envy, that thou feelest nought
Of all these evils. Sweetest life is found
In those unconscious years ere yet thou know
Or joy or sorrow. When thou com'st to this,
Then thou must show thy breeding to thy foes,
What son of what a father : but till then,
In gentle breezes grow, and rear thy life
A joy to this thy mother. And I know
That none of all the Achæan host will dare 560
Insult thee with foul scorn, though I be gone ;
Such a stout guardian will I leave for thee
In Teucros, still unsparing for thy need,
Though now far off he hunts our enemies.
And ye, who bear the shield, my sailor band,
On you in common this request I lay ;
Give him this message from me, home to take
This boy, and show him there to Telamon,
And to my mother, Eriboæa named,
That he may feed their age for evermore, 570
[Till they too enter the abode of Death ;]
And these my arms no umpires—no, nor yet

AIAS

That plague of mine—shall to Achæans give ;
 But thou, my son, Eurysakes, be true
 To that thy name, and holding by the belt
 Well wrought, bear thou the sevenfold shield unhurt ;
 But all my other arms with me shall lie
 Entombed. And now, take thou this boy indoors
 And close the tent, and shed no wailing tears
 Here in the front. A woman still must weep. 580
 Close up the opening quickly : skilful leech
 Mutters no spell o'er sore that needs the knife.

Chor. I tremble as I hear thy eagerness ;
 For I like not this sharp, keen-whetted speech.

Tec. Ah ! Aias, lord, what deed dost thou intend ?

Aias. Ask not ; inquire not. Self-command is good.

Tec. Ah ! my heart fails me. Now, by this thy son,
 And all the Gods, I pray thee, leave us not.

Aias. Thou vexest me too much. What ? Know'st
 thou not

That I no more am debtor to the Gods 590

That I should do them service ?

Tec. Hush ! oh, hush !

Aias. Speak thou to those that hear thee.

Tec. Wilt not thou

Be soothed, and hearken ?

Aias. Thou dost speak too much.

Tec. Yea, for I fear, O prince.

Aias. Quick ! lead her in.

[Sailors take *TECMESSA*, *EURYSAKES*, and the
 Attendant to the women's tent.

Tec. [From the tent.] Oh, by the Gods, relent thou.

Aias. Thou dost seem

A foolish thing to purpose, if thou think'st

At such a time as this to school my mood.

[Exit, into his tent.

STROPHE I

Chor. O glorious Salamis !

AIAS

Thou dwellest, blest within thy sea-girt shores,
Admired of all men still ;
While I, poor fool, long since abiding here 600
 *In Ida's grassy mead,
 *Winter and summer too,
*Dwell, worn with woe, through months innumerable,
Still brooding o'er the fear of evil things,
 That I ere long shall pass
To shades of Hades terrible and dread.

ANTISTROPHE I

And now our Aias comes,
Fresh troubler, hard to heal, (ah me ! ah me !) 610
And dwells with madness sore,
Which God inflicts ; him thou of old did'st send
Mighty in battle fierce ;
But now in lonely woe
Wandering, great sorrow he to friends is found,
And the high deeds of worthiest praise of old,
Loveless to loveless souls,
Are with the Atreidæ fallen, fallen low. 620

STROPHE II

And, lo ! his mother, worn with length of days,
And white with hoary age,
When she shall hear his frenzied soul's disease,
With wailing, wailing loud,
Will she, ill-starred one, cry, nor pour the strain
Of nightingale's sad song,
But shriller notes will utter in lament, 630
And on her breast will fall
The smiting of her hands,
And fearful tearing of her hoary hair.

ANTISTROPHE II

For better would he fare in Hades dread,
Who liveth sick in soul,

AIAS

Who, springing from the noblest hero-stock
 Of all the Achæans strong,
 Abides no longer in his native mood,
 But wanders far astray.
 O wretched father, what a weight of woe,
 Thy son's, hast thou to learn,
 Which none else yet has borne,
 Of all the high Zeus-sprung Æacidæ.

640

Enter AIAS from his tent, with his sword.

Aias. Time in its long, long course immeasurable,
 Both brings to light all hidden things, and hides
 What once was seen ; and nothing is there strange
 We may not look for : even dreadest oaths
 And firm resolves must yield themselves to him.
 So I, who for a while was stern and hard,
 Like steel, oil-dipped, am womanised in tone,
 Moved by my wife's fond prayers, whom I am loth
 To leave a widow with her orphaned child
 Among my foes. But now I go to bathe
 Where the fair meadows slope along the shore,
 That having washed away my stains of guilt,
 I may avert the Goddess's dire wrath ;
 And, going where I find a spot untracked
 By human foot, may bury this my sword,
 Weapon most hateful, digging up the earth
 Where none may see it ; but let Hades dark
 And Night watch o'er it. For from that same hour
 When I received it at great Hector's hands,
 A gift most deadly, never kindly word
 Had I from any Argive ; and most true
 Is found the proverb that one hears men say—
 "A foe's gifts are as no gifts, profitless."
 So for the future we shall know to yield
 Our will to God's, shall learn to reverence
 The Atreidæ even. They our rulers are,

650

660

AIAS

And we must yield. Why not? The strongest things
 That fright the soul still yield to sovereignty.
 Winters with all their snow-drifts still withdraw 670
 For summer with its fruits; and night's dark orb
 Moves on that day may kindle up its fires,
 Day with its chariot drawn by whitest steeds;
 And blast of dreadest winds will lull to rest
 The groaning ocean; and all-conquering sleep
 Now binds, now frees, and does not hold for aye
 Whom once it seized. And shall not we too learn
 Our lesson of true wisdom? I, indeed,
 Have learnt but now that we should hate a-foe 680
 Only so far as one that yet may love,
 And to a friend just so much help I'll give
 As unto one that will not always stay;
 For with most men is friendship's haven found
 Most treacherous refuge. But in this our need
 All shall be well, and thou, O woman, go
 Within, and pray the Gods to grant in full
 What my heart craves for. And do ye, my friends,
 Pay her the self-same honour as to me,
 And charge ye Teucros, should he come, to care
 For me, and show a kindly heart to you.
 For now I go the journey I must take; 690
 And ye, do what I bid you, and perchance
 Ye soon may hear of me, though now my fate
 Is evil, as delivered from all ill. [Exit.

STROPHE

Chor. I thrill with eager desire, I leap for gladness of
 heart,
 Io, Io, O Pan! ¹

¹ The hymn of the Chorus is addressed, first, to Pan as the God of impetuous, exulting joy, and, afterwards, to Apollo as the giver of a calmer and more spiritual gladness. Another reason for their choice is found in the fact that the island Psyttaleia, between Salamis and the mainland, was sacred to him. Thence, in legends

AIAS

O Pan ! O Pan ! O Pan !
 Pan that walketh the waves,
 Come from the snow-beaten heights
 From Kyllene's mountainous ridge.
 Come, O my king, that ledest the dance of the Gods,
 That thou with me may'st thread
 The dance of windings wild,
 Nysian, or Knossian named ;¹ 700
 For now I needs must dance for very joy.
 And King Apollo, o'er Icarian waves,
 Coming, the Delian God,
 In presence manifest,
 May He be with me gracious evermore.

ANTISTROPHE

And Ares, too, hath loosed the dark calamitous spell
 From off these eyes of ours :
 Io, and Io still,
 Once more, and yet once more.
 And now, O Zeus, again
 A day clear, cloudless, fair,
 May dawn upon our ships o'er waves swift-speeding ; 710
 For Aias rests from grief,
 And now with awe profound,
 Duly worships the Gods
 With meetest sacrifice.
 Time, with great changes, bringeth all things low,
 And never shall the word "impossible"
 Pass from my lips, since now
 Aias from wrath hath turned,
 And the hot mood that 'gainst the Atreidæ raged.

which were fresh in men's memories when Sophocles wrote, he had come forth to help the Athenians at Marathon and Salamis. Kyllene, in Arcadia, was the special home of Pan-worship.

¹ Nysian, like the dances of the *Thiasos* at Nysa, the birthplace of Dionysos, Knossian, like those at Knossos in Crete, in honour of the bride of Dionysos, Anadæne.

AIAS

Enter Messenger.

Mess. I wish, my friends, to tell my good news first :
Teucros is come but now from Mysian crags, 730
And coming where the generals all were met,
From all the Argive host foul speech he hears ;
For hearing of his coming from afar,
Gathering around him at his head they hurled
Their words of scorn, here, there, and everywhere,
Calling him brother of the madman, kin
Of him who laid his plans against the host,
And threatening that he should not save himself
From falling, bruised and mangled, stoned to death. 735
So far they went that even swords were drawn
Forth from their scabbards, and were crossed in fight ;
And when the strife had reached its furthest bounds,
It ceased with calmer speech of aged men.
But where is Aias that he too may hear ?
'Tis right to tell our masters all the truth.

Chor. He is not there within, but now is gone,
Changed counsels forming for his changing mood.

Mess. Ah me ! Or he who sent me on my way,
Sent me too late, or I too late have come.

Chor. What then is lacking in thy business here ? 740

Mess. Teucros forbade our chief to pass outside
His tent, till he himself were present here.

Chor. But he is gone, to best of tempers turned,
That he may 'scape the anger of the Gods.

Mess. These words of thine are full of foolishness,
If Calchas be a prophet wise and true.

Chor. What mean'st thou ? What know'st thou of all
these things ?

Mess. Thus much I know, and chanced, being there,
to hear ;

For from the council where the rulers sat,
Calchas alone, withdrawing from the Atreidæ, 750

AIAS

His right hand placing with all kindliness
 In Teucros' hand, urged him by every art,
 * For this one day, this very day, to keep
 Our Aias in his tent, nor let him go,
 If he desired to see him yet alive ;
 For that on this day only, so he spake,
 Athena's wrath would vex him. For the seer
 Said that the over-proud and foolish ones
 Fall into sore misfortunes from the Gods,
 When one, who draws his life from human birth,
 Then thinks and feels as he were more than man. 700
 And he, when starting hither from his home,
 Showed himself foolish son of prudent sire ;
 For thus he bade him : " With thy spear, my son,
 Strive thou to win, but win with help of God ! "
 And he replied, in foolish, vaunting speech,
 " My father, with God's help, a man of nought
 Might victory win ; but I, I trust, shall grasp
 Without their aid that glory for myself." 770
 Such boast he uttered ; and a second time,
 When great Athena urged him to the fight,
 And bade him turn his hand against his foes,
 He answered her with words one fears to speak :
 " O queen, stand thou the other Argives near ;
 The tide of battle will not sweep us down."
 With words like these, not thinking as a man
 Should think, he roused the Goddess to fierce wrath ;
 But if he lives this day, with help of God,
 We might be his deliverers. Thus the seer 780
 Spake, and then Teucros gives me this command
 For thee to keep. But if we miss our mark,
 Our lord is lost, or Calchas is not wise.

Chor. Ah, poor Tecmessa ! child of misery,
 Come thou, and hear what words are these he
 speaks ;

The knife has touched the quick, and joy is gone.

AIAS

Enter TECMESSA from the tent, with EURYSAKES.

Tec. Why rouse ye me, so lately freed from woe,
Woe very grievous, once again to grieve?

Chor. Hear thou this man, who now has tidings
brought

About our Aias, which I grieve to hear. 790

Tec. Ah me! O man, what say'st thou? Are we lost?

Mess. Of thy estate I know not, but for him
I have small hope, if he is not within.

Tec. Within he is not; so thy words bring woe.

Mess. Teucros doth bid thee keep thy husband safe
Within his tent, nor let him forth alone.

Tec. And where is Teucros? Why does he say this?

Mess. He has but just now come, and says he fears
Lest this departure bring to Aias death.

Tec. Woe, woe is me! From whom did he learn this?

Mess. From Thestor's son, the seer, who says this day,
This very day, brings life or death to him. [800

Tec. Ah, friends, come help me in my low estate,
And hasten, some, to bring me Teucros here;
Some seek the western bays, and some the east;
Go ye, and search the wanderings of my lord,
So fraught with evil. Well I see it now,
My husband tricked me, and has cast me out
From all his old affection. Ah, my son!
What shall we do? We must not linger here,
But I will onward with all strength I have. 810
On, hasten we; no time for loitering this,
[Wishing to save a man so bent on death.]

Chor. Full ready I, and not in words alone:
Swift action and swift feet shall go with them.

[*Exeunt* TECMESSA, Messenger, and Chorus.]

*Aias is seen in the distance by the sea-shore, fixing his
sword in the ground.*

Aias. The slayer stands where sharpest it will pierce,—

AIAS

If one had time to think of that,—the gift
 Of Hector, whom of all men most I loathed,
 And found most hostile. And in Troïa's soil,
 Soil of our foes, it stands with sharpened edge,
 Fresh whetted with the stone that wears the steel ;
 And I have fixed it carefully and well
 Where most it favours speedy death for him
 Who standeth here. So far, so good : and first,
 O Zeus, (for this is right,) be kind to me.
 I ask but this, (no mighty boon, I trow,)
 Send some one as a messenger to bear
 The evil news to Teucros, that he first
 May lift my corpse, by this sharp sword transfix'd,
 And that I may not, seen by any foe,
 Before he see me, be to dogs and birds
 Foully cast forth, their quarry and their spoil ;
 So much, O Zeus, I ask Thee ; and I call
 With Thee, great Hermes, guide of all the dead,
 And dweller in the dark, to close mine eyes
 Kindly, with one swift, unconvulsive spring
 Piercing my heart with this same sword of mine ;
 And those, the Ever-virgin Ones, I call,
 Erinnyes dread that see all human deeds,
 Swift-footed, that they mark how I am slain
 By yon Atreidæ ; may they seize on them,
 Doers of evil, with all evil plagues
 And uttermost destruction, as they now
 See me destroyed [with suicidal hand,
 So let them fall by dearest kindred slain.]
 Come swift Erinnyes, vengeful, glut yourselves
 (Yea, spare them not,) upon the host they rule.
 Thou Sun, whose chariot in the heaven's high path
 Rides on in glory, when Thou see'st the land
 Owned by my fathers, draw thy golden reins,
 And tell all these my sorrows, and my doom,
 To mine old father, and my mother lorn ;

AIAS

Ah ! when she hears, poor wretch, the evil news 880
 Through all the city, great and bitter cries
 Will issue from her lips. But not for me
 Is time for vain lament. The work must now
 Begin more swiftly. Come, and look on me,
 O Death, O Death !—and yet in yonder world
 I shall dwell with thee, speak enough with thee ;
 And Thee I call, thou light of golden day,
 Thou Sun, who drivest on thy glorious car,
 Thee, for this last time, never more again.
 O Light, O sacred land that was my home ;
 O Salamis, where stands my father's hearth, 890
 Thou glorious Athens, with thy kindred race ;
 Ye streams and rivers here, and Troia's plains,
 To you that fed my life I bid farewell ;
 This last, last word does Aias speak to you ;
 All else I speak in Hades to the dead.

[Falls on his sword, and dies.]

Enter Chorus, in two companies, searching for Aias.

Semi-Chor. A. Toil upon toil brings toil ;

Whither, ah, whither,

Whither have I not gone ?

And no place knoweth to help. 870

Lo ! lo ! again I hear a sound of fall.

Semi-Chor. B. 'Tis but our mates, the sailors of our ship.

Semi-Chor. A. What say ye then ?

Semi-Chor. B. The whole flank has been tracked
 West of the ships.

[Semi-Chor. A.] And is there aught discerned ?

Semi-Chor. B. Labour enough, but nothing more to see.

Semi-Chor. A. And yet upon the eastern region's path
 Our chief is clearly nowhere to be found.

Chor. Who, then, will tell me, who

Of fishers loving toil, 880

AIAS

Plying his sleepless task,
 Or who of Nymphs divine,
 That haunt Olympos' height,¹
 Of which of all the streams
 Where Bosporos flows fast,
 Will tell if they have seen him anywhere,
 Wandering, vexed in soul ?
 Hard destiny is mine,
 Long tried with weary, toilsome wanderings,
 That still I fail to reach with prosperous course,
 Nor see where now he stays, 890
 The man o'erwrought with ill.

Enter TECMESSA ; as she advances, she stumbles on the body.

Tec. Woe, woe is me !
Chor. What cry hard by is that from out the glade ?
Tec. Oh, miserable me !
Chor. I see that captive bride, the spoil of war,
 Tecmessa, crushed with this o'erwhelming grief.
Tec. I die, I perish, all is lost, my friends.
Chor. What, then, has happened ?
Tec. Aias lieth here
 Just slain, his sword within his body buried.
Chor. Woe, woe for my voyage home ! 900
 Woe, woe is me, thou hast slain,
 O king, thy shipmate true ;
 Ah me, grievous my lot !
 Grievous, O woman, thy woe !
Tec. Well may one groan and wail to find him thus.
Chor. But by whose hands did that ill-starred one die ?
Tec. He, by his own hand, it is plain ; for here
 This sword, firm fixed, on which he fell, gives proof.
Chor. Woe, woe is me for my grief !
 Alone thou wast bleeding to death,

¹ The Mysian Olympos which the Greek dramatists identified with Ida.

AIAS

None of thy friends near to guard ; 910
 And I, all deaf and all blind,
 Left thee, neglected, to fall.
 Where, ah ! where does he lie,
 Alas, ill-fated, with ill name of woe ?

Tec. Ye may not look on him, but I with robe
 Enfolded round, will hide him utterly ;
 For none who loved him now could have the heart
 To see him still up-panting from his wound,
 At either nostril, blackened gore and blood
 Springing from that self-slaughter. Now, ah me !
 What shall I do ? What friend will lift thee up ? 920
 And where is Teucros ? How in timeliest need
 Would he now come the body to lay out
 Of this his fallen brother ! O ill-starred
 Aias, who, being what thou wast, has fared
 As now thou farest ; e'en from bitterest foes
 Thou now could'st claim the meed of righteous tears.

Chor. O man of many woes, 'twas thine, 'twas thine,
 In stern unbending mood,
 At the fixed hour to work
 Ill doom of boundless griefs ;
 So all night long, till dawn, 930
 Thou poured'st dire complaint,
 With spirit vexed to death,
 Against the Atreidæ in thy bitter mood.
 Great author of our sorrows was that day,
 When for the arms of great Achilles rose
 Strife of the brave in fight.

Tec. Ah me ! Ah misery !

Chor. True griefs, I know too well, will pierce the
 heart

Tec. Ah me ! Ah misery !

Chor. I wonder not, O woman, thou should'st groan 940
 Yet more, but now of such a friend bereaved.

Tec. Thine 'tis to think ; mine all too well to know.

AIAS

Chor. I own it so.

Tec. Ah me ! to what a yoke of bondage, child,
We now draw nigh, what watchers over us !

Chor. Ah ! thou hast spoken now

Of deeds unutterable,

By the Atreidæ stern

Heaped upon this our grief :

But may God ward it off !

Tec. But for the Gods this had not happened so. 950

Chor. Yea, they have wrought a trouble hard to bear.

Tec. Such woe does Pallas, dreaded child of Zeus,
For her Odysseus' sake inflict on us.

Chor. Lo ! the man subtle to dare,

Mocks in the dark of his soul,

And laughs at this frenzy of woe

(Fie on't !) a laugh loud and long,

And with him those who share the name of king,

The Atreidæ, as they hear. 960

Tec. Let them, then, mock and laugh at this man's
woes ;

The time may come when they who did not care

To see him living, in the need of war

May groan that he is dead ; for still the base

In purpose never know the good they have,

Until they lose it. Bitter woe to me

His death has brought, to them good cheer, but joy,

Great joy to him ; for what he sought to gain,

Yea, death that he desired, he now hath won.

[How, then, can they exult in this man's death ?

'Twas for the Gods, and not for them he died.] 970

In empty vaunt, then, let Odysseus boast,

For Aias is beyond them ; but for me

He leaves, departing, wailing and lament.

Enter TFUCROS.

Teu. Woe is me ! Ah, woe !

AIAS

Chor. [*To TEUCROSSA.*] Hush ! for I think I hear our
Teucros cry,

With wailing loud that hits this great woe's mark.

Teu. O best-loved Aias, brother dear to me,
Hast thou, then, fared so ill as rumour holds ?

Chor. Our lord is dead, O Teucros, doubt it not.

Teu. Oh, woe is me ! Woe for my grievous lot ! 980

Chor. At such a pass . . .

Teu. Oh, miserable me !

Chor. Thou well may'st groan.

Teu. O rash and ruthless death !

Chor. Too truly so, O Teucros.

Teu. Woe is me !

What of his child ? Where in all Troia is he ?

Chor. Alone, within the tents.

Teu. Why bring ye not

With quickest speed the boy, lest any foe

Seize him, as whelp of lonely lioness ?

Go, hasten, work together. All are wont

To treat with scorn the dead that prostrate lie.

[*Some of the Chorus bring in EURYSAKES.*]

Chor. And while he lived, O Teucros, thee he charged,
For this his boy to care, as now thou car'st. 990

Teu. Sight of all sights most painful ; of all paths
Path vexing most my spirit, this, which now

My feet have taken, where, O Aias dear,

Still following thee and tracking out thy course,

I learnt thy fate : for lo ! a swift report,

As though some God had spread it, went of thee

Through all the Achæans, that thy death had come ;

And I in woe, and hearing it far off, 1000

Groaned low ; and seeing, perish utterly.

Ah, me ! [*Some of the Chorus, as he speaks, uncover the
body of AIAS.*]

Come, lay it bare, that I may see it well,

The whole dread evil. O most ghastly sight,

AIAS

And work of bitter daring, what a woe
 Thou, in thy death, hast sown for me ! Where go,
 Among what men, I who in all thy woes
 Have failed to help thee ? Telamon, I trow,
 My father, and thine too, will welcome me
 With cheerful glances, full of kindly mood, 1010
 Without thee coming. Can he fail to frown
 Who, e'en when all went well, but seldom smiled
 Too pleasantly on men ? What word of wrath
 Will he now hide ? What evil utter not ?
 Reproaching me as bastard, captive-born,
 Who, in my coward, base unmanliness
 Abandoned thee, O Aias, or in guile,
 That, on thy death, I might thy sceptre wield
 And rule thy house ? Such foul reproach will he,
 Rough in his mood, and vexed sore with age,
 Vent in his wrath, by trifles light as air
 To fiercest anger kindled. And at last
 I shall be hurled an outcast from my home,¹
 Bearing the name of slave instead of free 1020
 Such fate awaits me there. In Troia here
 Many my foes, and few the things that help ;
 And this, all this, thy death hath brought to me.
 What shall I do ? Alas ! how lift thee up
 From this bright sword whose murderous point hath
 brought
 Thee, wretched one, to death ? And did'st thou know
 How Hector thus, though dead, should bring thee low ?
 Now, by the Gods, look ye upon the fate
 Of those two men—how Hector, with the belt
 Which this man gave him, bound to chariot's wheel, 1030
 Was dragged and mangled, on and on, till death ;

¹ The words of Teucros point prophetically to his later history. He left Salamis, according to the legend, because his father drove him from his presence, went to Kypros, and there founded a city, which he named Salamis, in memory of his fatherland.

AIAS

While he who had this sword as Hector's gift,¹
 Brought death upon himself by one fell leap.
 Oh, did some dread Erinny's forge this sword,
 And Hades, stern artificer, that belt ?
 I must needs own the Gods as working this,
 And all things else that come to mortal men ;
 And he who thinks not so, why, let him have
 His own thoughts if he will ; I hold to these.

Chor. Be not too long, but ponder well how best 1040
 Thou may'st inter his body in the tomb,
 And what thou now wilt say ; for, lo ! I see
 A man, his foe, exulting, it may be,
 As evil-doer at the evil done.

Teu. What man of all the host is this thou see'st ?

Chor. 'Tis Menelaos, for whose sake we sailed.

Teu. I see him. Near, he is not hard to know.

Enter MENELAOS, followed by a Herald, and Attendants.

Mene. Ho, there ! I bid thee not to touch this corpse
 With these thy hands, but leave it as it is.

Teu. And why dost thou such big words lavish here ?

Mene. So think I : so thinks he who rules the host. 1050

Teu. Wilt thou not say what ground thou giv'st for
 this ?

Mene. Because we hoped to bring him from his home,
 Ally and friend to all the Achæan host,
 And found him than the Phrygians worse foe,
 Who, plotting death to all the host at once,
 Came on by night that he might slay with sword ;
 And were it not some God had quashed the scheme,
 We should have fallen, and, in shameful plight,
 By chance which now is his, had lain there dead,
 And he had lived ; but now a God has turned 1060
 His wanton rage to fall on flocks and herds ;

¹ Comp. *Iliad*, vii. 303, xxii. 361. . . Homer, however, makes Achilles drag the corpse of Hector at his chariot-wheels,

AIAS

And, therefore, there is no man strong enough,
 Be he who may, this body to entomb,
 But, cast forth here upon the yellow sands,
 It shall be prey for birds that haunt the shore.
 Therefore, I bid thee, keep from furious wrath ;
 For though we failed to rule him while he lived,
 We surely now will master him when dead,
 Wilt thou, or no, and with our hands control.
 For never when he lived would he obey 1070
 The words I spake : yet 'tis a vile man's part
 For one among the people not to deign
 To hear his masters. Never in a state
 Can laws be well administered when dread
 Has ceased to act, nor can an armed host
 Be rightly ruled, if no defence of fear
 And awe be present. But a man should think,
 Though sturdy in his frame, he yet may fall
 By some small chance of ill. And know this well,
 That he who has both fear and reverence 1080
 Has also safety. But where men are free
 To riot proudly, and do all their will,
 That State, be sure, with steady-blowing gale,
 Is driving to destruction, and will fall.
 For me, let seasonable awe be mine,
 Nor let us think that, doing what we please,
 We shall not one day pay the penalty
 In things that pain. These things come on in turn ;
 This fellow here was mocker hot and proud ;
 Now I am lifted up, and charge thee there
 This body not to bury, lest thou too,
 By burying him, should'st need a burial. 1090

Chor. O Menelaos, uttering maxims wise,
 Do not thyself then outrage so the dead.

Teu. I cannot wonder, friends, that one who lives,
 Brought up in low estate, should faults commit,
 When they who deem they come of noblest stock

AIAS

Such faulty words will utter in their speech.
 Come, let us start afresh : and dost thou say
 That thou did'st bring this man as stanch ally
 To these Achæans ? Did he not sail forth, -
 Himself his only master ? Or what right
 Had'st thou to rule the people that he led 1200
 Here from his home ? As Sparta's¹ king thou cam'st,
 And not as ours. No greater right had'st thou
 To rule o'er him than he to reign o'er thee.
 Thou cam'st an under-captain, not the lord
 Of all the host, that thou should'st Aias lead.
 Rule those thou rulest, vent thy solemn words
 On them ; but I, though thou should'st say me nay,
 Or e'en that other leader, I will place
 This body in the tomb with all due rites,
 Not fearing thy big speeches. He warred not 1110
 For that thy wife, as these who take their fill
 Of many labours, but to keep the oath
 By which he bound himself.¹ 'Twas not for thee,
 For never did he value men of nought.
 Come, therefore, bring more heralds with thee here ;
 Yea, bring the general's self. I would not care
 For all thy stir while thou art . . . what thou art.

Chor. I do not like such speech in midst of ills ;
 Sharp words will bite, however just they be.

Mene. This archer seems to have a lofty soul.² 1120

Teu. E'en so ; I practise no ungentle craft.

Mene. Had'st thou a shield, thy boast would soar in-
 deed.

¹ In the post-Homeric legends, Tyndareus, the father of Helena, bound all her suitors by an oath that they would, in case of calamity, come to his daughter's help.

² In Homer, both Gods and heroes use the bow without any thought of its inferiority to other weapons. Later changes in warfare had, however, thrown it into the background, and in Sparta it was used only by the Peræci, in Athens, by the foreigners (chiefly Scythians and Thracians) who were employed as a home-police.

AIAS

Teu. With thee, full-armed, I'll match myself light-armed.

Mene. How mightily thy tongue doth school thy thought.

Teu. With right on our side we may well be proud.

Mene. That he, slaying me, should prosper, was that right? *

Teu. "Slaying thee!" 'Twere strange if thou wert dead, who liv'st.

Mene. God saves me still; in his intent I'm slain.

Teu. Saved by the Gods, put not the Gods to shame.

Mene. What? Find I fault with laws of those in heaven? 1130

Teu. Yes, if thou stopp'st my burying of the dead.

Mene. The burial of my foes: for 'tis not well.

Teu. And when was Aias ever found thy foe?

Mene. He hated me; I him; and this thou know'st.

Teu. Yes; for 'twas thou did'st cheat with juggling votes.

Mene. That fault was with the judges, not with me.

Teu. With goodly stealth, then, thou would'st work much ill.

Mene. This speech shall bring a bitter grief to some.

Teu. Not one whit more, 'twould seem, than we shall cause.

Mene. I say but this, thou shalt not bury him. 1140

Teu. And hear thou this, that buried he shall be.

Mene. I once did see a man full bold of speech,
 Who urged his sailors in a storm to sail,
 But not a word had he, when driven to prayer
 By stress of tempest, but beneath a cloak
 He crouched, and let each sailor tread on him;
 And so for thee, and those thy haughty lips,
 Some great storm, blowing from a tiny cloud,
 Shall soon, perchance; hush all thy clamorous speech.

Teu. And I have seen a man of folly full 1150

AÍAS

Who wantoned proudly in his neighbour's ills,
And then one came, in fashion like to me,
And like in mood, and looked, and spake this word :
"O man, abstain from outrage to the dead,
For if thou dost it, dearly shalt thou pay."
Such counsel did he give that wretched fool,
And now I see him ; and he is, 'twould seem,
None else but thee. Do I speak parables?

Mene. I go my way, for it is sore disgrace
With words to punish, force being in our power. [*Exit.* ¹¹⁸⁰

Teu. Go, then, thy way ; to me 'tis worst disgrace
To hear a vain fool prating empty words.

Chor. Struggle of mighty strife there soon will be ;
But thou, O Teucros, speed,
Haste, some deep pit to find,
Where he shall find a grave of dreariest gloom,
Yet one which men will hold in memory.

[*TECMESSA advances, with EURYSAKES
holding her hand.*

Teu. And lo ! they come at very nick of time,
And stand hard by, this hero's wife and child,
To deck the burial of the ill-starred dead.

Come hither, boy, and standing suppliantly,
Lay hand upon the father that begat thee,
And sitting in the guise of one who prays,
Hold in thy hands my locks, and hers, and thine,
A treasure of entreaty. And should one

In all our army tear thee from the dead,
May he thus base, unburied, basely die,
An exile from his home, with all his race
As utterly cut off, as I now cut

This braided lock. Take it, O boy, and keep ;
Let no man move thee, hold it suppliant ;
And ye stand by him, not as women found
Who should be men, but help him till I come
To bury him, though all should hinder me.

[*Exit.*

AIAS

STROPHE I

Chor. When will it end, the last of wandering years,
That ever bring to me
The ceaseless woe of war's unresting toils, 1190
Through Troïa, drear and wide,
The Hellenes' shame and reproach ?

ANTISTROPHE I

Would that that man had entered Heaven's high
vault,
Or Hades, man's last home,
Who for the Hellenes stirred War's hateful strife ;
(O woes that woe beget !)
For he hath laid men low.

STROPHE II

He hath given me never to share
The joy of garlands of flowers,
Nor that of the deep, flowing cups, 1200
Nor the dulcet notes of the flute,
Nor—curses light on his head !—
The pleasure that cometh with sleep.
Yea, from love, from love and its joys
He hath cut me off. (Ah, woe is me !)
And here I lie, cared for by none,
My locks all wet with the dews,
Keepsake of Troïa the sad. 1210

ANTISTROPHE II

Till now against terrors of night,
And sharp arrows a bulwark and stay,
Was Aias, the mighty and strong ;
Now he, too, a victim is gone
To the God that ruleth in gloom ;
What joy remaineth for me ?
Would I were there, where the rock,
Thick-wooded and washed by the waves,

AIAS

Hangs o'er the face of the deep,
Under Sunion's broad jutting peak,
That there we might hail, once again,
Athens, the holy, the blest.¹

1280

Enter TEUCROS.

Teu. Lo! I have hastened, seeing our general come,
Our Agamemnon, speeding on his way,
And plain it is he comes to speak hard words.

Enter AGAMEMNON.

Agam. They tell me that thou darest fearful words
To vent against us with impunity,
Thou, yes, e'en thou, of captive mistress born;
A noble mother truly can'st thou boast,
'That thou dost speak so loftily, and walk
On tip-toe proudly, who, being nought, dost strive 1280
For him who is as nothing, and dost swear
We did not come to rule the host or fleet,
Or thee, or the Achæans; but thou say'st
That Aias sailed himself his only lord.
And are not these big words to hear from slaves?
And what was he for whom thou vauntest thus?
Where went he, or where stood, where I was not?
Had the Achæans then no men but him?
A strife full bitter for Achilles' arms
We set before the Argives then, 'twould seem, 1290
If everywhere a Teucros call us base,
And ye are not content, though worsted quite,
To yield to what the judges have decreed
With all but one consent, but still revile
Our name, and, when defeated, strike at us

¹ The words point to what every hearer of the play must have been familiar with. As a homeward ship rounded the point of Sunion, the Acropolis was seen in the distance, and all on board offered their prayers to the two national deities, Athena and Poseidon, whose shrines stood on the promontory.

AIAS

In secret guile. With such a mood as this
 There can be no establishment of law,
 If we shall cast off those whose right prevails,
 And lead the hindmost to the foremost rank.
 Nay, we must check these things. The safest men
 Are not the stout, broad-shouldered, brawny ones, 1260
 But still wise thinkers everywhere prevail ;
 And oxen, broad of back, by smallest scourge
 Are, spite of all, driven forward in the way ;
 And that sure spell, I see, will come ere long
 On thee, unless thou somehow wisdom gain,
 Who, when thy lord is gone, a powerless shade,
 Art bold, with wanton insolence of speech.
 Wilt thou not learn self-mastery ? Wilt thou not,
 Remembering what thou art by birth, when next
 Thou comest, bring some free-born man with thee 1260
 Who, in thy stead, shall speak thy words to us ?¹
 For I, indeed, learn nothing by thy speech,
 Thy barbarous accent so offends mine ear.

Chor. Would that ye both self-mastery could learn :
 'Better than this I cannot wish you both.

Teu. Alas ! How soon the credit of the dead
 Flits, and is gone, and proves but treacherous stay,
 When this man, Aias, takes no count of thee,
 Not e'en in poor, cheap words, for whom thou oft
 Thy life exposing, strovest in the fight ; 1270
 But all the past is past, and thrown aside.
 O thou that speakest such a senseless speech,
 Hast thou no memory, none, of that same day
 When ye were shut within the bulwarks high,
 Already good as dead, and he, himself,
 Alone, came on to help, and freed you all,

¹ A slave, or foreigner, according to the laws of Athens and most Greek states, was not allowed to plead personally, but had to be represented by a citizen. Agamemnon taunts Teucros—as the son, not of Eriboea, the wife, but of Hesione, the concubine, of Telamon with being an alien.

AIAS

Putting to flight your foes, when fire had seized
 *Your ships' tall masts, and where the sailors sit,
 And Hector's self was leaping o'er the trench
 Right on your sailors' boats ?¹ Who staved this off ?
 Was it not he of whom thou now dost say, 1280
 That never did he stir a foot for thee ?
 Nay, wrought he not in your sight noble deeds ?
 And yet once more, when he went forth to meet,
 In single combat, Hector, casting lots,
 At no man's word, the lot which he put in
 Was no deserter, lump of moistened clay,²
 But one full sure to be the first to leap
 With nimble spring from out the crested helm ;
 'Twas he that did all this, and I with him,
 The base-born slave, of alien mother sprung.
 Thou wretch, what face hast thou to utter this ? 1290
 And know'st thou not the father that begat
 Thy father, Pelops, was of alien blood,
 A Phrygian born of old ;³ that Atreus, he
 Who gave thee life, was godless in his deeds,
 And placed before his brother banquet foul
 Of his own children's flesh ; and thou thyself
 Wast born of Cretan mother, whom her sire,
 Detecting with the alien, headlong cast
 A prey to voiceless fishes ? And dost thou,
 Such as thou art, reproach me with my birth,
 Such as I am, who on my father's side,

¹ Comp. *Iliad*, xv. 415.

² Sophocles, with a slight anachronism, brings before his Athenian audience what they were always willing to listen to, the story of the fraud by which the Dorian Cresphontes had obtained possession of Messenia.

³ In one form of the Pelops *mythos*, Thyestes, the brother of Atreus, was the adulterer, and Atreus drowned the adulteress. Here, however, Sophocles follows the legend which made Aerope, while yet in Crete, guilty of unchastity, and condemned by her father, Cratreus, to die by drowning. The executioner spared her Pos, and she afterwards married Atreus.

AIAS

From Telamon am sprung, who gained the prize
 Of all the host for valour, and obtained 1800
 My mother as a concubine, who claimed
 A kingly birth from old Laomedon,
 And whom Alcmena's son as chosen gift
 Gave to my father ? And should I, thus sprung
 Noble, from noblest, shame my kith and kin,
 Whom now, in such ill plight as this enwrap,
 Thou thrustest out unburied, and dost feel
 No shame to speak it ? But of this be sure,
 If ye will cast him forth, ye will cast, too,
 Us three around him clinging ; for 'twere good,
 Striving for him to die in open fight, 1810
 *Much rather than for that false wife of thine,¹
 Or for thy brother ; wherefore look thou well
 Not to my business only but thine own ;
 For should'st thou hurt me, thou shalt wish to be
 A coward rather than wax bold on me.

Enter ODYSSEUS.

Chor. Thou com'st, O King Odysseus, seasonably,
 If thou art here to stop, not stir the strife.

Odys. What is it, sirs ? for from afar I heard
 The Atreidæ's clamour o'er this noble corpse.

Agam. And have we not, O King Odysseus, heard 1820
 But now most shameful language from this man ?

Odys. What was it ? I can much forgive a man
 Who, hearing vile things, answers evil words.

Agam. Foul words he heard, for such his deeds to me.

Odys. And what was this he did that injured thee ?

Agam. He says he will not leave this corpse un-
 tombed,

¹ So the text stands, yet the Trojan war was waged, not for the wife of Agamemnon, but for Helen, the wife of Menelaos. There may, perhaps, be a taunt implied in the phrase, implying either (1) that Agamemnon fought for Helen as if he were her husband, or (2) that he was urged to the war by his own wife, the sister of Helen

AIAS

But, spite of my command, will bury it.

Odys. And may I, as a friend who speaks the truth,
Row in thy boat, as welcome as before?

Agam. Speak on ; or else I should be most unwise, ¹³³⁰
Who count thee, of all Argives, truest friend.

Odys. Hear then ; by all the Gods, I thee entreat,
Cast not this man out so unfeelingly,

Nor leave him there unburied. Let not wrath
Prevail on thee that thou should'st hate so far

As upon right to trample. Unto me
This man of all the host was greatest foe,

Since I prevailed to gain Achilles' arms ;

But, though he were so, being what he was,

I would not put so foul a shame on him,

As not to own I looked upon a man,

The best and bravest of the Argive host, 1340

Of all that came to Troia, saving one,

Achilles' self. Most wrong 'twould therefore be

That he should suffer outrage at thy hands ;

Thou would'st not trample upon him alone,

But on the laws of God. It is not right

To harm, though thou should'st chance to hate him sore,

A man of noble nature lying dead.

Agam. Art thou, Odysseus, this man's champion
found ?

Odys. E'en so ; I hated while 'twas right to hate.

Agam. Ought'st thou not then to trample on him
dead ?

Odys. In wrongful gain, Atreides, find not joy.

Agam. Full hard this fear of God for sovereign
prince. 1350

Odys. Not so^d to honour friends who counsel well,

Agam. The noblest man should those that rule obey.

Odys. Hush ! thou dost rule when worsted by thy
friends.

Agam. Remember thou to whom thou giv'st this grace.

AIAS

Odys. An é enemy, but still a noble one.

Agam. What wilt thou? Dost thou a foe's corpse
revere?

Odys. Far more than hatred valour weighs with me.

Agam. Fickle and wayward, natures such as thine.

Odys. Many once friends again are bitter foes.

Agam. And dost thou praise the getting friends like
these? 1380

Odys. Unbending mood I am not wont to praise.

Agam. Thou wilt this very day make cowards of us.

Odys. Nay, righteous men in all the Hellenes' eyes.

Agam. And dost thou bid me let him bury it?

Odys. I do, for I myself shall come to that.

• *Agam.* All men are like; each labours for himself.

Odys. Whom should I work for more than for myself?

Agam. It shall be called thy work then, and not mine.

Odys. Howe'er that be, in any case thou'rt kind.

Agam. But know this well, that I would grant to
thee 1370

Far greater boon than even this thou ask'st ;

But as for him, or here, or there, he still

Is hateful to me ; . . . But have thou thy will.

Chor. Who says, Odysseus, thou'rt not wise of heart,
Being what thou art, shall prove himself a fool.

Odys. And now I tell to Teucros that I stand

A friend as true as once I was a foe,

And I desire to join in burying him

Who there lies dead, to join in all the toil,

And fail in nought of all that men should pay

Of homage to the noblest men of earth. 1380

Teu. O good Odysseus, words of praise are mine

For all thou dost, and thou hast falsified

My thoughts of thee, for thou, most hostile found

To him of all the Argives, stood'st alone

To help him with thy hands, and did'st not dare

To trample living upon him the dead,

AIAS

. When this brain-stricken captain of the host,
 He and his brother with him, came and sought
 To cast him out deprived of sepulture.
 Now, therefore, may the Father whose high sway 1390
 Olympos rules, Erinnyes noting guilt,
 And Justice the avenger punish them
 For foul deeds foully, even as they wished
 To cast this man to shame unmerited.
 And thee, O son of aged Lartios,
 Loth am I now to let thee take thy share
 In burying him, lest I perchance should do
 What he, the dead, approves not. [All the rest
 Do thou do with me, and, if thou wilt bring
 Some soldiers from the host, we shall not grieve.]
 All else will I do, and for thee, know well,
 Thou show'st thyself to us as great of soul.

Odys. I fain had joined, but if it please thee not 1400
 That we should share, I go thy words accepting.

Teu. Enough ; already the time
 Is wearing swiftly away ;
 Haste ye, some to prepare
 A deep hollowed pit for the grave,
 And some a tall tripod set
 Fit for our task, girt with fire,
 Meet for washing the dead.
 One band, let it fetch from the tent
 His breast-plate, his greaves, and his sword :
 And thou, O boy, in thy love, 1410
 With all the strength that thou hast,
 Here, with thy hand on his side,
 Thy father's, lift him with me ;
 For still the hot veins pour their stream,
 The dark, thick blood of his strength.
 But come ye, come, one and all,
 Who boast of yourselves as his friends ;
 Hasten, come quick to the work,

AIAS

Labouring for him who in all
Was good, and none better than he.

Chor. Men may know many things on seeing them ;
But, ere they come in sight,
No man is prophet of the things that come, 1420
To tell how he shall fare.



PHILOCTETES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ODYSSEUS.

NEOPTOLEMOS, son of ACHILLES.

PHILOCTETES.

HERACLES.

Attendant.

Sailor.

ARGUMENT.—*Philoctetes, son of Pæas, king of the Malians, of Cæta, in Thessaly, wooed Helena, the daughter of Tyndareus; and her father having bound him and the other suitors by an oath, to defend her in case of wrong, he joined the great expedition of the Hellenes against Troia. And as he landed at Chryse, treading rashly on the sacred ground of the nymph from whom the island took its name, he was bitten in the foot by a snake; and the wound became so noisome, and the cries of his agony so sharp, that the host could not endure his presence, and sent him in charge of Odysseus to Lemnos, and there he was left. And nine years passed away, and Achilles had died, and Hector, and Aias, and yet Troia was not taken. But the Greeks took prisoner Helenos, a son of Priam, who had the gift of prophecy, and they learnt from him that it was decreed that it should never be taken but by the son of Achilles, and with the bow of Heracles. Now, this bow was in the hands of Philoctetes, for Heracles loved him, because he found him faithful; and when he died on Cæta, it was Philoctetes who climbed up the hill with him, and prepared the funeral pyre, and kindled it: therefore Heracles gave him his arrows and his bow. The Hellenes, then, first sent to Skyros to fetch Neoptolemos, the son of Achilles, and then, when he had arrived, they despatched him with Odysseus to bring Philoctetes from Lemnos.*

PHILOCTETES

SCENE.—*The shore of Lemnos. Rocks and a Cave in the background.*

Enter ODYSSEUS, NEOPTOLEMOS, and Attendant, followed by Chorus of Sailors, who remain in the background.

Odys. Here, then, we reach this shore of sea-girt isle,
Of Lemnos, by the foot of man untrod,
Without inhabitant, where, long ago,
(O thou who growest up to man's estate,
Sprung from a father noblest of the Greeks,
Son of Achilles, Neoptolemos,) I set on shore the Melian, Pæas' son,
His foot all ulcerous with an eating sore,
Sent on this errand by the chiefs that rule;
For never were we able tranquilly
To join in incense-offerings, nor to pour
Libations, but with clamour fierce and wild
He harassed all the encampment, shouting loud,
And groaning low. What need to speak of this? 10
It is no time for any length of speech,
Lest he should hear of my approach, and I
Upset the whole contrivance wherewithal
I think to take him. But thy task it is
To do thine office now, and search out well
Where lies a cavern here with double mouth,
Where in the winter twofold sunny side
Is found to sit in, while in summer heat
The breeze sends slumber through the tunnelled vault;
And just below, a little to the left, 20

PHILOCTETES

Thou may'st perchance a stream of water see,
If still it flow there. Go, and show in silence
If he is dwelling in this self-same spot,
Or wanders elsewhere, that in all that comes
Thou may'st give heed to me, and I may speak,
And common counsels work for good from both.

Neop. [*Clambering on the rocks.*] O King Odysseus, no
far task thou giv'st ;

For such a cave, methinks, I see hard by.

Odys. Above thee or below ? for this I see not.

Neop. *Here, just above ; yet footstep there is none.

Odys. Look to it lest he chance to sleep within. 30

Neop. I see an empty cave untenanted.

Odys. *Are there no household luxuries within ?

Neop. Some leaves pressed down as for some dweller's
use.

Odys. Is all else empty ? nought beneath the roof ?

Neop. A simple cup of wood, the common work
Of some poor craftsman, and this tinder stuff.

Odys. His precious store it is thou tell'st me of.

Neop. [*Starting back.*] Ah ! . . . And here, too, these
rags are set to dry,

Full of some foul and sickening noisomeness.

Odys. Clearly the man is dwelling in this spot, 40
And is not distant. How could one so worn
With that old evil in his foot go far ?

But either he is gone in search of food,
Or knows perchance some herb medicinal ;
And therefore send this man to act the scout,
Lest he should come upon me unawares,
For he would rather seize on me than take

All other Argives. [*Exit Attendant.*]

Neop. He is gone to watch
The path. If aught thou needest, speak again.

Odys. Now should'st thou prove thyself, Achilles'
son, 50

PHILOCTETES

Stout-hearted for the task for which thou cam'st,
Not in thy body only, but if thou
Should'st hear strange things, by thee unknown till
now,
Still give thy help, as subaltern to me.

Neop. What dost thou bid me ?

Odys. Thou must cheat and trick *
The heart of Philoctetes with thy words ;
And when he asks thee who and what thou art,
Say thou'rt Achilles' son, (that hide thou not,)
And that thou sailest homeward, leaving there
The Achæans' armament ; with bitter hate
Hating them all, who having sent to beg
Thy coming with their prayers, as having this 60
Their only way to capture Ilion's towers,
Then did not deign to grant thee, seeking them
With special claims, our great Achilles' arms,
But gave them to Odysseus. What thou wilt
Say thou against me to the utmost ill :
In this thou wilt not grieve me ; but if thou
Wilt not do this, on all the Argive host
Thou wilt bring sorrow ; for, unless we get
His bow and arrows, it will not be thine
To sack the plain of Dardanos. And how 70
I cannot have, and thou may'st have access
To him both safe and trustworthy, learn thus ;
For thou hast sailed as bound by oath to none,¹
Not by constraint, nor with the earlier host,
But none of all these things can I deny ;
So, if he sees me while he holds his bow,
I perish, and shall cause thy death as well.
But this one piece of craft thou needs must work,

¹ For the suitors of Helen, who followed Agamemnon because of the oath with which her father Tyndareus had bound them, it would have been disgraceful to leave the army. Neoptolemos was under no such obligations, and this would give a probability to this story which, with any other of the host, would be wanting.

PHILOCTETES

That thou may'st steal those arms invincible.

I know, O boy, thy nature is not apt

To speak such things, nor evil guile devise ;

But sweet it is to gain the conqueror's prize ;

Therefore be bold. Hereafter, once again,

• We will appear in sight of all as just.

But now for one short day give me^ethyslf,

And cast off shame, and then, in time to come,

Be honoured, as of all men most devout.

Neop. The things, O son of Lartios, which I grieve

To hear in words, those same I hate to do.

I was not born to act with evil arts,

Nor I myself, nor, as they say, my sire.

Prepared am I to take the man by force,

And not by fraud : for he with one weak foot

Will fail in strength to master force like ours ;

And yet, being sent thy colleague, I am loth

To get the name of traitor ; but I wish,

O king, to miss my mark in acting well,

Rather than conquer, acting evilly.

O dys. O son of noble sire, I, too, when young,

Had a slow tongue and ready-working hand ;

But now, by long experience, I have found

Not deeds, but words prevail at last with men.

Neop. But what is all thou bidd'st me say but lies ?

O dys. I bid thee Philoctetes take with guile.

Neop. And why by guile, when suasion might succeed ?

O dys. He will not hearken, and by force thou can'st not.

Neop. Has he so dread a strength whereto he trusts ?

O dys. His darts unerring, bringing swiftest death.

Neop. Is it not ~~safe~~, then, e'en to speak with him ?

O dys. Not so, unless, as I repeat, in guile.

Neop. Dost thou not count it base to utter lies ?

O dys. Not so, when falsehood brings deliverance.

Neop. But with what face can one such falsehoods
speak ?

PHILOCTETES

Odys. When acts bring gain, it is not well to shrink.

Neop. What gain for me that he should come to Troia ?

Odys. This bow and this alone shall Troia take.

Neop. Am I not destined, as thou said'st, to take it ?

Odys. Nor thou from these, nor these from thee apart.

Neop. If so it stands, then we must hunt for them.

Odys. So doing thou shalt gain two gifts of price.

Neop. What are they ? Learning them I shall not shrink.

Odys. Thou shalt be known at once as wise and good.

Neop. Come, then, I'll do it, casting off all shame. ¹²⁰

Odys. Rememb'rest thou the counsel that I gave ?

Neop. Be sure of that, when I have once agreed.

Odys. Do thou, then, here abiding, wait for him,

And I will go, lest I be seen with thee,

And send our scout to yon ship back again.

And if ye seem to me to linger long,

The self-same man will I send back, in guise

Of seaman's dress, his form disguising so

That he may come unknown ; and thou, my son,

When he speaks craftily, do thou receive

The things shat profit in each word he drops :

Now to the ship I go, and trust to thee ;

And Hermes, God of Guile, who sends us on,

And Victory, e'en Athena Polias,¹

Who saves me ever, lead us on to win.

[*Exit*

Chorus advances.

STROPHE I

Chor. What, what is meet, my prince,

For me, a stranger in a land that's strange,

To utter or conceal,

With one so prone to look suspiciously ?

¹ The form of the invocation connected itself with the sanctuaries of Athens. Besides the temple built to her as Athena Polias, there was a statue of her in the Acropolis in the character of Victory.

PHILOCTETES

Tell me, I pray ; his art
All other art and counsel still excels,
Whose hands the sceptre wield
That Zeus assigns from heaven to them that rule ; 140
And thou, my son, hast gained
This glory of the old ancestral past ;
Tell me, then, tell, I pray, "
What service 'tis our work to do for thee.
Neop. Now, it may be, thou dost wish
To see the place where he lies
Far off. Take courage, and look ;
But when he appears who went forth,
Wayfarer dread from his home,
Then come thou at my beck,
And strive to render thy help
As each present need may demand.

ANTISTROPHE I

Chor. Thou tellest, O my king, 150
Of what has been full long a care to us,
To watch that eye of thine
For thine especial need ; but tell, I pray,
What kind of home is his,
And in what spot he now may chance to be.
'Tis not unmeet to know,
Lest he should fall upon me unawares
What place, what seat has he,
What path, or near, or far, does he now tread ?
Neop. Thou see'st this dwelling with its double
door, 160
Its chamber in the rock.
Chor. And where is that poor sufferer absent now ?
Neop. To me it is plain that he treads
This path near, hunting for food.
For this is the fashion of life,
So rumour runs, that he leads,

PHILOCTETES

With swift darts shooting the game,
Wretched, and wretchedly fed,
And that here none wendeth his way,
As friend and healer of ills.

STROPHE II

Chor. I pity him, for one,
Thinking how he, with none to care for him, 170
Seeing no face of friend,
Ever, poor wretch, in dreary loneliness,
Suffers from sore disease,
And wanders on in sore perplexity
At every urgent need.
Oh, how, yea, how can he his sorrows bear?
*O handiwork of Gods!
O wretched men, who miss their life's true mean!

ANTISTROPHE II

He, born of ancient house,
And falling short of none of all the line, 180
Now stript of all the things
That make up life, lies here, apart from all,
With dappled deer, or beasts
With shaggy manes, still dwelling in his pain,
In hunger fierce, with griet
That none can heal; and Echo far and wide,
With ever-babbling cry,
Repeats his wail of bitter, loud lament. 180
Neop. I wonder at none of these things;
If I err not, they come from a God,
From Chryse, ruthless of soul,¹
And now the woes that he bears,
With none to care for him near,
From some God needs must they come,

¹ In one form of the legend, Chryse was enamoured of Philoctetes, and, failing to gain his love, cursed him, and caused the serpent to avenge her.

PHILOCTETES

That he may not Troia destroy
With darts of Gods none can resist,
Ere the time run on to its close,
When, as they say, it is doomed
To be by those weapons subdued.

200

Chor. Hush, hush, O boy!

Neop. What is this?

Chor. The sounds of step we heard,
As of some man who drags his weary way,
Or here or there around;
There falls, ah yes, there falls upon my ears
Clear sound of one who creeps,
Slow and reluctant, on the well-worn track.
It is not hid from me

That bitter cry that cometh from afar,
Wearing man's strength away;
For very clearly comes his wailing cry,
But now, O boy, 'tis time

210

Neop. For what?

Chor. For thoughts and counsels new,

For lo! the man is not far off, but near;
No note of reed-pipe his,
As shepherd roaming idly through the fields,
But stumbling, for sheer pain,
He utters a lament that travels far,
Or seeing this our ship
Lying anchored in the bay inhospitable;
For sharp and dread his cry.

Enter PHILOCTETES in worn and tattered raiment.

Phil. Ho, there, my friends!
Who are ye that have come to this our shore,
And by what chance? for neither is it safe
To anchor in, nor yet inhabited.
What may I guess your country and your race?
Your outward guise and dress of Hellas speak,

220

PHILOCTETES

To me most dear, and yet I fain would hear
Your speech ; and draw not back from me in dread,
As fearing this my wild and savage look,
But pity one unhappy, left alone,
Thus helpless, friendless, worn with many ills.
Speak, if it be ye come to me as friends :

Nay, answer me, it is not meet that I
Should fail of this from you, nor ye from me. 230

Neop. Know this then first, O stranger, that we come,
Of Hellas all ; for this thou seek'st to know.

Phil. O dear-loved sound ! Ah me ! what joy it is
After long years to hear a voice like thine !
What led thee hither, what need brought thee here ?
Whither thy voyage, what blest wind bore thee on ?
Tell all, that I may know thee who thou art.

Neop. By birth I came from sea-girt Skyros' isle,
And I sail homeward, I, Achilles' son, 240
Named Neoptolemos. Now know'st thou all.

Phil. O son of dearest father, much-loved land,
Thou darling boy of Lycomedes old,
Whence sailing, whither bound, hast thou steered hither ?

Neop. At present I from Ilion make my voyage.

Phil. What say'st thou ? . Thou was surely not with
us

A sailor when the fleet to Ilion came ?

Neop. What ? Dids't thou, too, share that great enter-
prise ?

Phil. And know'st thou not, O boy, whom thou dost
see ?

Neop. How can I know a man I ne'er beheld ? 250

Phil. And did'st thou never hear my name, nor fame
Of these my ills, in which I pined away ?

Neop. Know that I nothing know of what thou ask'st.

Phil. O crushed with many woes, and of the Gods
Hated am I, of whom, in this my woe,
No rumour travelled homeward, nor went forth

PHILOCTETES

Through any clime of Hellas! But the men
Who cast me out in scorn of holiest laws
Laugh in their sleeve, and this my sore disease
Still grows apace, and passes into worse.
My son, O boy that call'st Achilles sire, 260
Lo! I am he, of whom perchance thou heard'st,
That I possess the arms of Heracles,
The son of Pœas, Philoctetes, whom
Our generals twain and Kephallene's king¹
Basely cast forth thus desolate, worn out
Through fierce disease, with bite of murderous snake,
Fierce bite, sore smitten; and with that, O boy,
Thus desolate they left me, when they touched
From sea-girt Chryse in their armament; 270
And when they saw me, tired and tempest-worn,
Asleep in vaulted cave upon the shore,
Gladly they went, and left me, giving me
Some wretched rags that might a beggar suit,
And some small store of food they chanced to have.
And thou, my son, what kind of waking-up
Think'st thou I had, when I arose from sleep,
And found them gone—what bitter tears I wept.
What groans of woe I uttered? when I saw
The ships all gone, with which till then I sailed,
And no man on the spot to give me aid, 280
Nor help me struggling with my sore disease;
And, looking all around, I nothing found
But pain and torment, and of this, my son,
Full plenteous store. And so the years went on,
Month after month, and in this lowly cell
I needs must wait-upon myself. My bow
Found what my hunger needed, striking down
The swift-winged doves, but whatsoe'er the dart,

¹ Kephallene is named, rather than Ithaca, as implying a greater scorn, the Kephallenians being of ill repute both as traders and as pirates.

PHILOCTÈTES

Sent from the string, might hit, to that poor I
Must wend my way, and drag my wretched foot,
Even to that; and if I wanted drink,
Or, when the frost was out in winter time,
Had need to cleave my firewood, this poor I
Crept out, and fetched. And then no fire had I,
But rubbing stone with stone I brought to light,
Not without toil, the spark deep hid within;
And this e'en now preserves me; for a cell
To dwell in, if one has but fire, provides
All that I need, except release from pain.

And now, my son, learn thou this island's tale :

No sailor here approaches willingly,
For neither is there harbour, nor a town,
Where sailing he may profit gain, or lodge.
No men of prudence make their voyage here ;
Yet some, perchance, may come against their will ;
(Such things will happen in the lapse of years ;)
And these, my son, when they do come, in words
Show pity on me, and perchance they give
Some food in their compassion, and some clothes ;
But none is willing, when I mention that,
To take me safely home, but here poor I
Wear out my life, for nine long years and more,
In hunger and distress this eating sore
Still nursing. Such the deeds th' Atreidæ did,
And great Odysseus. May the Olympian Gods
Give them to bear like recompense for this !

Chor. I seem, O Pœas' son, to pity thee
As much as any stranger that has come.

Neop. And I myself am witness to thy words,
And know that they are true, for I have found
The Atreidæ and the great Odysseus base.

Phil. What! Hast thou too a grudge against those
vile ones,

The Atreidæ, that thy wrongs have stirred thy rage ?

PHILOCTETES

Neop. Would it were mine some day to glut my rage !
That Sparta and Mykenæ both might know,
That Skyros, too, is mother of brave men.

Phil. Well said, O boy ! And what offence has
caused

This mighty wrath with which thou comest here ?

Neop. I'll tell thee, Pœas' son, though scarce I can, ²⁹⁰
What I endured of outrage at their hands ;
For when the Fates decreed Achilles' death,

Phil. Ah me ! Speak nothing further till I learn
This first ; and is the son of Peleus dead ?

Neop. Dead is he, not by any man shot down,
But by a God,—by Phœbos, as they say.¹

Phil. Well, noble He that slew, and he that fell ;
And I, my son, am much in doubt, if first
To ask thy sufferings, or to mourn for him.

Neop. Thine own misfortunes are enough, I trow ;
Thou need'st not sorrow o'er thy neighbour's lot. ³⁴⁰

Phil. Thou sayest well, and therefore tell again
That business in the which they outraged thee.

Neop. There came for me in ship all gaily decked,
High-born Odysseus, and my father's friend,²
Who reared his youth, and said, or true or false,
That since my father's death none else but me
Might take the Towers. And so with words like these,
O stranger, no long time they kept me there
From sailing quickly ; chiefly in my love,
My longing love for him who lay there dead, ³⁵⁰
That I might see him yet unsepulchred,
For never had I known him. Next to this,
Promise full fair there was that I should go,
And take the Towers that over Troïa hang.

¹ "As they say ;" for the arrow, though guided by Apollo, was shot by Paris.

² Phoenix, who, as the legend ran, went with Odysseus to Skyros to fetch the son of Achilles.

PHILOCTETES

And as I sailed our second morning's voyage,
With prospering oar Sigeion's shore I reached,
Full bitter to me ; and forthwith the host,
All standing round, with one voice greeted me,
E'en as I landed, swearing that they saw
Achilles who was gone, alive again ;
He then lay there, and I, poor hapless boy,
Wept over him, and not long after went 280
To those Atreidæ as my friends, (for so
'Twas meet to think them,) and of them I asked
My father's arms, and all things else of his.
And they spake out, ah me ! a shameless speech :
" O offspring of Achilles, all the rest
That was thy father's it is thine to choose ;
But of those arms another now is lord,
Laertes' son." And I with many a tear
Rise up in hot displeasure, and I say,
In my fierce wrath, " O wretch ! and have ye dared
To give my arms, before ye learnt my mind, 370
To any but to me ?" And then there spake
Odysseus, for he chanced to stand hard by,
" Yea, boy ; most justly have they given them me,
For I, being with him, saved both him and them."
And I, being angry, hurled all evil words
Straight in his teeth, and nothing left unsaid,
Should he deprive me of those arms of mine.
And he at this point, though not prone to wrath,
Stung to the quick, thus answered what he heard :
" Thou wast not where we were, but stood'st aloof
Where thou should'st not ; and since thou speak'st to
us,
So bold of tongue, with these thou ne'er shalt sail 380
To Skyros back." And hearing words like these,
And foul reproaches, now I homeward sail,
Out of mine own rights cheated by a man
Base-born, Odysseus, basest of the base.

PHILOCTETES

And yet I blame not him so much as those
Who reign supreme; for all a city hangs,
And all an army, on the men that rule;
And they who wax unruly in their deeds
Come to be base through mood of those that guide.
Now my whole tale is told, and he who hates
The Atreidæ, may he be my friend and God's! 390

Chor. O Goddess Earth, that reignest on the hills,¹
Giver of food to all;
Mother of Zeus himself,
Who dwellest where the full Pactolos rolls²
Its streams o'er golden sands;
There also, dreaded Mother, I invoked thee,
When all the scorn of the Atreidæ fell
On him who standeth here,
When they his father's weapons gave away
(O Holy One, who sittest on thy car, 400
On lions fierce that slay the mighty bulls!)
To Lartios' son a glory and a prize.

Phil. 'Twould seem that you have hither sailed, my
friends,
With sorrow's friendship-token, and with mine
Your voice accords, so that I see these deeds
Are by the Atreidæ and Odysseus done:
For well I know that he with that glib tongue
Leaves no base speech or subtlety untouched,
From which nought right shall in the issue spring. 410
At this I marvel not, but much to think
The elder Aias should have seen and borne it
Neop. He was not living, friend. Had he but lived,
I had not then been plundered of these things.

¹ The Goddess, Earth (*Ge*) is here, as in the later form of Greek mythology, identified (1) with Cretan Rhea, the mother of Zeus, and (2) with the Phrygian Kybele, riding on her lions, the Goddess of the land where the Atreidæ had done their wrong.

² The Pactolos flowed from Mount Tmolos, the head-quarters of the worship of Kybele.

PHILOCTETES

Phil. What say'st thou? Is he also dead and gone?

Neop. Think thou of him as seeing light no more.

Phil. Ah, wretched me! That son to Tydeus born,
That child of Sisypnos that Lartios bought,¹
They will not die;—for they ought not to live.

Neop. Not dead are they, be sure: but, lo! they live,
And now are mighty in the Argives' host. 420

Phil. And what of that old worthy, my good friend,
Nestor of Pylos; for he still was wont
With his wise counsels to restrain their ill.

Neop. He, too, fares badly, since Antilochos,
His dear-loved son, has left him and is dead.

Phil. Ah, me! These two that thou hast told me of,
Were those whose deaths I least had wished to hear.
Fie on it! fie! and whither can one look,
When these men die and here Odysseus lives,
Who ought in their stead to be named a corpse? 430

Neop. A crafty foe is he, yet craftiest schemes,
O Philoctetes, oft a hindrance find.

Phil. Now tell me, by the Gods, and where is he,
Patroclos, whom thy father loved so well?

Neop. He too is dead, and I, in one short speech,
Will tell thee this, that war ne'er wills to take
One scoundrel soul, but evermore the good.

Phil. I bear thee witness, and for that same reason
I'll ask thee now of one of little worth,
But open-mouthed and crafty, how he fares. 440

Neop. And who is this thou speak'st of but Odysseus?

Phil. I mean not him, but one, Thersites named,
Who never was content to speak but once,
When no man asked him,—know'st thou if he lives?

Neop. I saw him not, but heard that still he lived.

Phil. Well may he live, for nothing bad will die,

¹ See note on Aias, 188.

PHILOCTETES

So well the Gods do fence it round about ;
And still they joy to turn from Hades back
The cunning and the crafty, while they send
The just and good below. What thoughts can I 450
Of such things form, how offer praise, when still,
Praising the Gods, I find the Gods are base ?

Neop. I, O thou son of sire whom Æta knows,
I, for the future, with a far-off glance
At Ilion and the Atreidæ, stand on guard ;
And where the worse o'erpowers the better man,
And good things perish, and the coward wins,
These men, and such as these, I ne'er will love ;
But rocky Skyros shall in times to come¹
Suffice for me to take mine ease at home. 460

Now to my ship I go. And thou, O son
Of Pœas, fare thee well, good luck be thine,
And may the Gods release thee from thy pain,
As thou desirest ! Now then let us start ;
When God fair weather gives us, then we sail.

Phil. And do ye start already ?

Neop. Yes ; the time
Bids us our voyage think near, and not far off.

Phil. By thy dear sire and mother, I, my son,
Implore thee as a suppliant, by all else
To these most dear, thus lonely leave me not, 470
Abandoned to these evils which thou see'st,
With which thou hearest that I still abide ;
But think of me as thrown on you by chance :
Right well I know how noisome such a freight ;
Yet still do thou endure it. Noble souls
Still find the base is hateful, and the good
Is full of glory. And for thee, my son,
Leaving me here comes shame that is not good ;

¹ The proverbial poverty and insignificance of the island gave the resolve of Neoptolemos a special emphasis. "Even Skyros, poor as it is."

PHILOCTETES

But doing what I ask thee thou shalt have
Thy meed of greatest honour, should I reach
Alive and well the shores of Ceta's land.
Come, come! The trouble lasts not one whole day : 400
Take heart ; receive me ; put me where thou wilt,
In hold, or stern, or stem, where least of all
I should molest my fellow-passengers.
Ah, by great Zeus, the suppliant's God, consent ;
I pray thee, hearken. On my knees I beg,
Lame though I be and powerless in my limbs.
Nay, leave me not thus desolate, away
From every human footstep. Bring me safe,
Or to my home, or where Chalkodon holds¹ .
His seat in fair Eubœa : thence the sail
To Ceta and the ridge of Trachis steep, 410
And fair Spercheios is not far from me,
That thou may'st shew me to my father dear,
Of whom long since I've feared that he perchance
Has passed away. For many messages
I sent to him by those who hither came,
Yea, suppliant prayers that he would hither send,
Himself to fetch me home. But either he
Is dead, or else, as happens oft with men
Who errands take, they holding me, 'twould seem,
In slight account, pushed on their homeward voyage.
But now, for here I come to thee as one
At once my escort and my messenger, 500
Be thou my helper, my deliverer thou,
Seeing all things full of fear and perilous chance,
Or to fare well, or fall in evil case ;
And one that's free from sorrow should look out
For coming dangers, and, when most at ease,

¹ Chalkodon, son of Abas, had been the ally of Heracles : so Philoctetes might therefore naturally look for a welcome from him. In Athenian legends, Elephenor, the son of Chalkodon, was the friend of Theseus.

PHILOCTETES

Should then keep wariest watch upon his life,
Lest unawares he perish utterly.

Chor. Have pity, O my prince, for he hath told
Of sorrows which, I pray
No friend of mine may know.

But if, O prince, the Atreidæ, rough and fierce,
Thou hatest in thy soul,

I, reckoning on the profit-side for him
The evil they have done, would take him home,
And on my good ship swift

Make for the haven which his heart desires,
Escaping thus the righteous wrath of Gods.

Neop. Take heed lest thou be very pliant now, 520
But when thou hast thy fill of that foul pest,
Should'st show no more at one with these thy words.

Chor. Far be that from me ! Thou shalt ne'er have cause
With that reproach to vilify my name.

Neop. Right shameful were it I more loth should seem
Than thou to help a stranger in his need :

But, if it please you, let us sail at once.
And let him too be quick to start with us ;
Our ship will take him, will not say him nay.
This only pray I, that the Gods may bring us
From this land safe to where we seek to sail.

Phil. O day best loved by me, and man most dear, ^u
And ye, my sailor friends, how best may I
Show in my acts the grateful love I feel ?
Come, let us go, my son, and bid farewell
To that my homeless home, that thou may'st learn
What way I lived, and how I was by nature
Full stout of heart. Another man, I trow,
Would hardly even bear with glance of eye,
To look on such a sight. But I have learnt,
Through sheer constraint, to acquiesce in ills.

Chor. [*To NEOPTOLEMOS.*] Stop ; let us learn. Two
men draw near, the one

PHILOCTETES

A sailor from thy ship, the other seems
A stranger. Ask of them, and then go in.

540

Enter Attendant, disguised as a trader, and a Sailor.

Attendant. Son of Achilles, this my shipmate here,
Who with two others o'er the ship kept watch,
I deen'd to tell where thou might'st chance to be ;
For so I met him, not intending it,
But he the self-same harbour brought by chance.
For he is owner of my little boat,
Was going home from Ilion to the shores
Of Penæthos, where the grapes grow fair ;¹
And when I heard that all those sailors there
Had sail'd with thee, I deem'd it well to wait
Silent no longer, but to tell thee all,
And then to sail with what my news deserves :
For thou know'st naught of what concerns thee much,
The new plans which the Argives form for thee ;
Nor are they plans alone, but of a truth
Are being done, no longer tarrying.

550

Neoptol. I owe thee thanks for this thy forethought, friend,
And yet I be not base those thanks will last.
But tell me what thou mean'st, that I may know
What new device thou from the Argives bring'st.

560

Attendant. They with good show of ships pursue thee now,
The aged Phoenix and great Theseus' sons.

Neoptol. By force to bring me back, or by their words ?

Attendant. I know not ; what I heard, I come to tell.

Neoptol. And can it be that Phoenix and his mates
Make such good speed for those Atreidæ's sake ?

Attendant. Know that this is being done and lingers not.

Neoptol. How was it then Odysseus did not come,

¹ Penæthos, almost as famous as Chios for its wine, would naturally be one of the chief sources of supply for the Hellenes who were besieging Troia. In the time of Demosthenes, its produce was exported as far as Pontus.

PHILOCTETES

A volunteer, self-summoned ? Did he fear ?

Attend. He and the son of Tydeus went their way ⁵⁷⁰
To seek another, when I started forth.

Neop. And who was this for whom Odysseus sailed ?

Attend. There was a man, . . . but tell me first who this
I see may be, and what thou say'st, speak low.

Neop. This, friend, is Philoctetes, known to fame.

Attend. Ask me no more, but with thine utmost speed
Hasten thy way, and from this island sail.

Phil. What saith he, boy, and why with darkling words
Does he, that sailor, traffic in my life ?

Neop. I know not what he says, but all he speaks ⁵⁸⁰
He must speak out to thee, and me, and these.

Attend. O son of great Achilles, charge me not
Before the host with saying things I ought not ;
For I, doing them good service, (far at least
As poor man can), get good return for it.

Neop. I am the Atreidæ's foe, and this man here
Is my best friend, because he hates them too ;
And thou, who comest as a friend to me,
Should'st not hide from us aught of what thou heard'st.

Attend. Take heed, O boy.

Neop. Long since I'm on the watch.

Attend. I'll hold thee guilty.

Neop. Hold, but tell thy tale. ⁵⁹⁰

Attend. That will I tell. It is to bring this man
Those twain, whose names thou knowest, Tydeus' son
And great Odysseus, sail, by oath fast bound
That they will either bring him back, with words
Persuading him, or else with force and arms ;
And all the Achæans heard Odysseus speak
This clearly out. More confident 'vas he
That he should do it than the other was.

Neop. And for what cause, so long a time elapsed,
Did those Atreidæ turn to seek this man
Whom for so long they had in exile left ?

600

PHILOCTETES

Whence came this yearning? Can it be the power
And vengeance of the Gods who wrong requite?

Attend. All this, for thou perchance hast heard it not,
I now will tell. A certain noble seer,
A son of Priam, Helenos his name,
There was, whom this man, going forth alone
By night (I mean Odysseus, full of craft,
On whom all words of shame and baseness fall)
As prisoner took, and where the Achæans meet
As goodly spoil displayed him. And he then,
Both all the rest to them did prophesy, 610
And that they should not take the Towers that hang
O'er Troïa, till, with words persuading him,
They fetched the man who in this island dwells.
And when Laertes' offspring heard the seer
Say this, he straightway promised he would bring
This man, and to the Achæans show him there,
And that he thought to do it with his will,
But, will or nill, to bring him; and he gave
Full leave to any man to take his head
If he should fail. And now, boy, thou hast heard
All that I know, and I must counsel speed 620
For thee and him, and any man thou lov'st.

Phil. Ah, woe is me! Did he, that utter mischief,
Swear to persuade me, and to bring me back
To those Achæans? Just as soon would I
Be moved, when dead, from Hades to return
To light of day, as that man's father did.¹

Attend. Of this I know not. To my ship I go,
And now God send you all his choicest gifts. [Exit

Phil. And is it not, boy, dreadful that this man,
The son of Lartios, should expect to bring me

¹ Sisyphos, who is spoken of as the real father of Odysseus, had, it was said, begged Persephone to allow him to return to the world of the living that he might punish his wife, Merope, for leaving him unburied, and then refused to go back again to Hades.

PHILOCTETES

With glozing words, and show me from his ship
To all the crowd of Argives? Nay, not so: 680
For rather would I listen to the voice
Of that dread viper which my soul most hates,
That made me thus disabled. But his soul
Will say all, dare all, and I know full well
That he will come. But now, boy, let us go,
That a wide sea may part us from the ship
Odysseus sails in. Oft hath timely haste,
When toil hath ceased, brought slumber and repose.

Neop. Were it not well, when this head-wind shall cease,
Then to sail on, for now 'tis in our teeth? 640

Phil. 'Tis all fair sailing when thou flee'st from ill.

Neop. *I know it, but the wind retards them too.

Phil. There is no wind retards the pirate's work,
When time is come for theft and plundering.

Neop. Well, if it please thee, let us go, but first
Take what thou needest and desirest most.

Phil. Some things there are I need, though small the
choice.

Neop. What is there which thou find'st not on my ship?

Phil. A herb there is with which I mostly lull
My wound's sharp pain, and make it bearable. 650

Neop. Well, bring it out. What else desirest thou?

Phil. If from my quiver aught has chanced to drop
Through my neglect, that no man find it here.

Neop. Is this that thou dost bear the far-famed bow?

Phil. This, and none other hold I in my hands.

Neop. And may I have a nearer view of it,
And hold it, and salute it, as a God?

Phil. Thou shalt have this, my son, and if aught else
Of mine shall please thee, that too shall be thine.

Neop. I wish and long, and yet my wish stands thus;
I fain would, were it right; if not, refuse. [660

Phil. Thou askest but thy due, and it is right,
My son, who only giv'st me to behold

PHILOCTETES

The light of day, and yon Cætan shore,
My aged father, and my friends,—whose arm,
When I was trodden down, has raised me up
Above my foes. Take heart : it shall be thine
To touch them, yea, and give them back to me,
And boast that thou, alone of all that live,
Hast, for thy virtue's sake, laid hands on them :
For I too gained them by good deeds I did.

670

Neop. I grieve not now to see thee as a friend,
And take thee with me, for a man that knows,
Receiving good, to render good again,
Would be a friend worth more than land or goods ;
Go thou within.

Phil. And I will take thee too :
My ailment makes me crave to have thy help.

[Exeunt into the cavern.]

STROPHE I

Chor. I know the tale, though these eyes saw it not,
Of him who came too near
The marriage-bed of Zeus,
*How him, a prisoner bound on whirling wheel,
The son of Kronos smote, omnipotent ;¹
But never have I seen or heard of one
Of mortal men that met
A gloomier fate than his,
Who having done no wrong to life or goods,
But just among the just,
Was brought thus low, in doom dishonourable :
And wonder holds my soul,
How he, still hearing in his loneliness
The dashing of the breakers on the shore,

680

¹ Ixion's guilt, in the old Greek legends, was, first, that of treacherous murder, and then, when Zeus had compassion upon the madness and misery that followed, the crime here referred to, for which Zeus bound him for ever to a fiery, never-resting wheel in Tartaros.

PHILOCTETES

Endured still to live
A life all lamentable ;

690

ANTISTROPHE I

Where he alone was neighbour to himself,
Powerless to move a limb,
And having on this isle
No habitant, companion in his grief,
With whom to wail his sharp and bleeding pain,
In echoing burst of lamentation loud,
With none to stanch or soothe
(When such ill came on him)
The scalding blood that oozed from cankering sore
Of that envenomed foot,
With healing herbs, or fetch them from the earth
That giveth food to all ;
But ever like a child without its nurse,
Now here, now there, he dragged his writhing limbs,
Wending his way for ease,
When the pain respite gave :

700

STROPHE II

Never from out the lap of sacred earth
The seed-corn gathering,
Nor aught that we, who live by work, enjoy,
But only what perchance
He gained, the pangs of hunger to appease,
With those swift-winged darts
That travelled straight and far.
O soul deep plunged in woe,
Who never, in the space of ten long years,
Did know the wine-cup's joy,
But still did go, where eager glance might guide,
To drink of standing pool ;

710

ANTISTROPHE II

But now, thou, meeting one from heroes sprung,

PHILOCTETES

720

Shalt end in being great,
And prosper well after those woes of thine ;
Who now, the long months passed,
Art borne in ship that travels o'er the waves
To that thy father's home,
Where wander Malia's nymphs,
And by Spercheios' banks,
Where he who bore the brazen shield, though man,¹
Draws near, a God, to Gods,
Bright with the fire that flashes from the sky,
High above Ceta's slopes.

*Enter PHILOCTETES and NEOPTOLEMOS from the
cavern.*

Neop. Come, if thou wilt. But why, without a cause,
Stand'st thou so silent and astonishèd ? [730

Phil. [*Groaning heavily.*] Ah ! ah ! ah !

Neop. What means this cry ?

Phil. 'Tis nought, my son ; go on.

Neop. Art thou in pain from onset of disease ?

Phil. Not so, not so ; I think 'tis easier now.

Ye Gods ! ye Gods !

Neop. Why groan'st thou thus, and callest on the
Gods ?

Phil. That they may come with power to soothe and
save.

Ah ! ah ! ah ! [*Groaning in agony.*]

Neop. What ails thee ? Wilt thou thus thy silence
keep, 740

And wilt not tell ? 'Tis clear some ill is on thee.

Phil. I perish, O my son, and cannot hide

The evil from thee ? Oh, it darts, it darts.

O misery ! O miserable me !

¹ The man who bore the brazen shield is, of course, Heracles, the friend of Philoctetes, from whom, though as yet neither he nor the Chorus dream of it, his deliverance is at last to come.

PHILOCTETES

I perish, O my son ; it eats me up.

[Gasps with suppressed agony.]

Oh ! by the Gods, my son, if thou hast there
A sword at hand, smite thou this foot of mine,
And lop it off at once. Care not for life:
Come, boy, be quick. . . .

Neop. And what new sudden grief 760
Is this for which thou mak'st this wailing and lament ?

Phil. Thou know'st, my son.

Neop. What is't ?

Phil. Thou knowest, boy.

Neop. What is it ? I know not.

Phil. How can it be

Thou dost not know it well ? Ah me ! Ah me !

[Gasping, as before.]

Neop. Sore is the growing weight of thy disease.

Phil. Yea, sore beyond all words : nay, pity me.

Neop. What shall I do then ?

Phil. Do not in thy fear

Desert me, for it now is come, perchance,

*After long time, retreating when 'tis sated.

Neop. Ah ! miserable one, most miserable, 760
All worn with many woes, dost thou then wish
That I should hold thee, touch thee ?

Phil. Nay, not so :

But take my bow and arrows, which but now
Thou asked'st for, and keep them till the force
Of the sharp pain be spent ; yea, guard them well,
For slumber takes me, when this evil ends ;
Nor can it cease before : but thou must leave me
To sleep in peace : and should they come meanwhile,
Of whom we heard, by all the Gods I charge thee,
Nor with thy will, nor yet against it, give 770
These things to them, by any art entrapped,
Lest thou should'st deal destruction on thyself,
And me, who am thy suppliant.

PHILOCTETES

Neop. Take good heart,
If forethought can avail. To none but thee
And me shall they be given. Hand them me,
And good luck come with them!

Phil. [*Giving his bow and arrows to NEOPTOLEμος.*]

Lo there, my son!

Receive thou them, but first adore the Power
Whose name is Jealousy, that they may prove
To thee less full of trouble than they were
To me, and him who owned them ere I owned.

Neop. So be it, O ye Gods, to both of us;
And may we have a fair and prosperous voyage 780
Where God thinks right, and these our ships are bound.

Phil. I fear, O boy, lest all thy prayers be vain;
For now the dark blood, oozing from the depths,
Drops once again, and I await a change.

Ah! ah! ah me!

Fie on thee, foot, what evil wilt thou work?
It creeps, it comes again on me. Ah me!
O miserable me! Ye know it now:
Flee ye not from me—flee ye not, I pray!
O Kephallenian friend, would God this pain 790
Might fasten on thy breast, and pierce thee through!
Ah me! Once more, ah me! Ye generals twain,—
Thou, Agamemnon, Menelaos, thou,—
Would God ye both might bear this fell disease,
As long a time as I! Woe, woe is me!
O Death! O Death! why com'st thou not to me,
Thus summoned day by day continually?
And thou my son, brave boy, come, cast me in,
Consume me in this Lemnian fire,¹ dear boy, 800
By me so oft invoked. I too of old,

¹ The "Lemnian fire" is that of the volcano Mosychlos, which had become the type-instance of burning mountains to the Athenians after the conquest of the island by Miltiades. In what follows, Philoctetes refers to his kindling the funeral pyre of Heracles on Mount Ceta.

PHILOCTETES

For these his arms which now thou cherishest,
Thought meet to do this for the son of Zeus.
What say'st thou, boy? what say'st thou? Why not
speak?

Where go thy thoughts now?

Neop. Troubled sore long since,
Lamenting thy misfortunes.

Phil. Nay, O boy,
Be of good cheer. It comes upon me sharply,
And quickly goes away. Nay, leave me not,
I pray thee, here alone.

Neop. Fear not; we'll stay.

Phil. And wilt thou stay?

Neop. Deem that beyond all doubt. 810

Phil. I do not care to bind thee by an oath.

Neop. I may not go from hence apart from thee.

Phil. Give me thy hand as pledge.

Neop. I give it thee
As pledge of our remaining.

Phil. [*Starting in agony.*] Take me there,
There, there, I say.

Neop. But whither meanest thou?

Phil. Above. . . .

Neop. [*Laying hold on PHILOCTETES.*] Why ravest thou,
and why dost gaze
Upon yon vault above us?

Phil. Let me go,
I tell thee; let me go!

Neop. Where shall I leave thee?

Phil. Leave me, I say, a while.

Neop. It may not be.

Phil. If thou but touch me, thou wilt work my
death.

Neop. [*Releasing him.*] And I will let thee go, if thou,
indeed,
Art calmer now.

PHILOCTETES

Phil. [*Throwing himself on the ground.*] O Earth, receive me here,
Just as I am, half-dead. This sore disease
No longer lets me hold myself upright. [*Falls asleep.* 820
Neop. Sleep, so 'twould seem, would make the man its
own

In no long time ; for, lo ! his head droops back,
And drops of sweat from all his body fall,
And the dark vein from out his instep breaks,
Bursting with blood. But let us leave him here
In peace, that he may fall on sleep at last.

STROPHE

Chor. Come, blowing softly, Sleep, that know'st not
pain,
Sleep, ignorant of grief,
Come softly, surely, kingly Sleep, and bless ;
Keep still before his eyes
*The band of light which lies upon them now. 830
Come, come, thou healing one :
And thou, my son, take heed
How thou or stand or stir,
And what new counsels lie before us now ;
Thou see'st him : wherefore, then,
Do we delay to act ?
Occasion guiding counsel, in all things,
If used at once, gains prize of victory.

Neop. [*In an altered tone, as if chanting an oracle.*] He,
indeed, heareth nought, and well I see that
all vainly,
Sailing off without him, we gain the spoil of his
weapons. 840
His are the glory and crown, him the God bade us bring
with us ;
And sore disgrace will it be, false boasting of task-work
unfinished.

PHILOCTETES

ANTISTROPHE

Chor. For this, my son, God's will shall well provide ;
But what thou speak'st again
Speak gently, O my son, speak gently now
With 'bated breath, speak low.
To all whom pain and sickness make their own,
Sleep is but sleepless still,
And quick to glance and see.
But now, with all thy power,
Look thou to that, to that, all secretly,
See how thou best may'st work.
Thou know'st well whom I serve ;
And if thy measures be the same as his,
*Then men of judgment look for troubles sore.

EPODE

The time is come, my son, the time is come
All sightless, void of help,
The man in darkness lies,
(Right sound is sleep beneath the burning sun,)
And stirs nor hand, nor foot, nor any limb, 860
But seems like one in Hades stretched full length.
Look to it well, and think if thou dost speak
The things that suit the time.
Far as my mind can grasp,
The toil that brings no fear holds highest place.
Neop. I bid you hush, nor lose your wits in fear ;
The man has oped his eyes, and lifts his head.
Phil. [*Waking.*] O light that follow'st sleep ! O help,
my thoughts
Had never dared to hope for from these strangers !
For never had I dreamt, O boy, that thou
With such true pity would'st endure to bear
All these my sorrows, and remain, and help. 870
The Atreidæ ne'er had heart to bear with them,
As well as thou hast borne. Brave generals they !

PHILOCTETES

But thou, my son, who art of noble heart,
And sprung from noble-hearted ones, hast made
But light of all, though every sense be filled
With stench and shrieks. And now, since respite seems
At hand, and some refreshment after pain,
Do thou, my son, upraise me, steady me,
That when the pain shall leave me, we may make 880
Straight for the ship, and tarry not to sail.

Neop. Right glad am I to see, beyond all hopes,
That thou dost live and breathe, as free from pain ;
For, measured by the nature of thine ills,
Thy symptoms were of one who breathes no more.
But now rise up, or, if it please thee best,
These men shall bear thee, nor will grudge their toil,
Since this seems right to thee and me to do.

Phil. I thank thee, boy. Do thou, as thou dost say,
Upraise me ; but for these men, let them be,
Lest they too soon be sickened with the stench ; 890
To dwell with me on board is bad enough.

Neop. So shall it be ; but rise, and lean on me.

[*PHILOCTETES rises, with the help of NEOPTOLEMOS,
and walks, leaning on his arm.*]

Phil. Be not afraid ; long use will keep me straight.

Neop. [*Suddenly starting.*] O heavens ! what now remains for me to do ?

Phil. What ails thee, O my son ? What words are these ?

Neop. I know not how to speak my sore distress.

Phil. Distress from what ? Speak not such words,
my son.

Neop. And yet in that calamity I stand.

Phil. It cannot be my wound's foul noisomeness · 900
Hath made thee loth to take me in thy ship ?

Neop. All things are noisome when a man deserts
His own true self, and does what is not meet.

Phil. But thou, at least, nor doest aught nor say'st,

PHILOCTETES

Unworthy of thy father's soul, when thou
Dost help a man right honest.

Neop.

I shall seem

Basest of men. Long since this tortured me.

Phil. Not from thy deeds, but from thy words I shrink.

Neop. What shall I do, O Zeus? Once more be found
A villain, hiding things I should not hide,
And speaking words most shameful?

Phil.

This man seems,

Unless my judgment errs, about to sail,
Betraying and deserting me.

Neop.

Not so;

'Tis not deserting thee that tortures me,
But lest I take thee to thine own distress.

Phil. What means this, boy? I do not grasp thy scope.

Neop. I will hide nought. Thou must to Troia sail,
To those Atreidæ and the Argive host.

Phil. Ah me! what say'st thou?

Neop.

Groan not till thou know.

Phil. What knowledge? What mean'st thou to do
with me?

Neop. To save thee from this evil first, and then
With thee to go and ravage Troia's plains.

Phil. And dost thou think, indeed, to do all this?

Neop. A stern necessity compels; and thou,
Hear me, and be not angry.

Phil.

I am lost,

Ah me! betrayed. What hast thou done to me,
O stranger? Give me back my bow again.

Neop. That may not be. To list to those that rule
Both with the right, and mine own good accords.

Phil. Thou fire, thou utter mischief, masterpiece
Of craft most hateful, how thou treated'st me,
Yea, how deceived'st! Art thou not ashamed,
Thou wretch, to look on me thy suppliant,
Fleeing to thee for succour? Taking these,

PHILOCTETES

My arrows, thou dost rob me of my life ;
Restore them, I beseech thee, I implore,
Restore them, O my son. By all the Gods
Thy fathers worshipped, rob me not of life.
Ah, wretched me ! He does not answer me,
But looks away as one who will not yield.
O creeks ! O cliffs out-jutting in the deep !
O all ye haunts of beasts that roam the hills,
O rocks that go sheer down, to you I wail,
(None other do I know to whom to speak,)
'To you who were my old familiar friends,
The things this son of great Achilles does ;
Swearing that he would take me to my home
He takes me off to Troia ; giving me
His right hand as a pledge, he keeps my bow,
The bow of Heracles, the son of Zeus,
And fain would show me to the Argive host.
He takes me off by force, as though I were
In my full strength, and knows not that he slays
A dead, cold corpse, a very vapour's shade,
A phantom worthless. Never, were I strong,
Had he o'erpowered me ; even as I am
He had not caught me but by fraud ; but now
I have been tricked most vilely. What comes next ?
What must I do ? . . . Nay, give them back to me.
Be thyself once again. . . . What sayest thou ?
Thou 'rt silent . . . I, poor I, am now as nought.
O cave with double opening, once again
I enter thee stript bare, my means of life
Torn from me. I shall waste away alone
In this my dwelling, slaying with this bow
Nor wingèd bird, nor beast that roams the hills ;
But I myself, alas, shall give a meal
To those who gave me mine, and whom I chased
Now shall chase me ; and I, in misery,
Shall pay in death the penalty of death

PHILOCTETES

By me inflicted ; and all this is done
By one who seemed to know no evil thought :
Destruction seize thee. . . . Nay, not yet, till I
Have learnt if thou wilt once more change thy mood ;
If not, then may'st thou perish miserably !

Chor. [*To* NEOPTOLEMOS.] What shall we do ? It rests
with thee, O prince,

To bid us sail, or with his words comply.

Neop. Not for the first time now, but long ago
Has a strange pity seized me for this man.

Phil. Have mercy on me, boy, by all the Gods,
And do not shame thyself by tricking me.

Neop. What shall I do ? Ah, would I ne'er had left
My Skyros ! so great evils press on me.

Phil. Thou art not base thyself, but from the base
Learning foul evil, thou, 'twould seem, did'st come :
Now leaving it to those whom it befits,
Sail on thy way . . . but first give back my arms.

Neop. [*To* Chorus.] What shall we do, friends ?

Enter ODYSSEUS, suddenly appearing from behind.

Odys. Wretch, what doest thou ?
Wilt not go back, and give the bow to me ?

Phil. Ah ! Who is this ? Do I Odysseus hear ?

Odys. Know well, it is Odysseus that stands here ?

Phil. Woe ! woe ! I am entrapped, I am undone ;
And was it he who snared me, filched mine arms ?

Odys. I and none other. I avow the deed.

Phil. [*To* NEOPTOLEMOS.] Dear boy, restore it ; give
me back my bow.

Odys. That he shall not do, even though he wish ;
Thou too go'st with them, or these men shall force thee.

Phil. What ? me ? thou basest and all-daring one ;
And shall they force me ?

Odys. Yea, unless thou go
Of thine own will.

PHILOCTETES

Phil. O land of Lemnos' isle,
O mightiest Fire by great Hephæstos wrought,¹
Can it be borne this man should bear me off
By force from thy dominions ?

Odys. Zeus, 'tis Zeus,
Know thou this well, that rules this land—that Zeus
Who wills these things ; I but his servant am. 990

Phil. O hateful wretch, what bold device is this ?
Sheltering thyself behind the Gods, thou mak'st
The Gods as liars.

Odys. Nay, not so, but true ;
At any rate this journey thou must go.

Phil. No, that I will not.

Odys. Yes, thou shalt : obey !

Phil. Ah, miserable me ! 'Tis clear our sire
Begot us not as freemen, but as slaves.

Odys. Nay, nay, not so, but equal with the best,
With whom thou too must Troia take and sack, *
And raze it to the ground.

Phil. [*Rushing to a projecting point of the cliff.*] That
ne'er shall be,
Not though I needs must suffer every ill,
While yet this beetling crag is left to me. 1000

Odys. What wilt thou do ?

Phil. From this rock throw myself,
And dash my head upon the rock below.

Odys. [*To the Sailors.*] Quick, hold him fast. Prevent
his doing it.

[*Sailors seize PHILOCTETES, and bind his
hands behind his back.*]

Phil. O hands ! What shame ye suffer, lacking now
The bow-string that ye loved so well, and thus
Made prisoners by this man ! O thou, whose soul

¹ The "fire" is again that of the volcano, which was believed to come from the forge at which Hephæstos laboured in the heart of the mountain.

PHILOCTETES

Has never known a generous, healthy thought,
 How hast thou tricked me, ta'en me in a snare,
 Putting this boy I knew not, as thy blind,
 Unmeet for thee, for me of meetest mood,
 Who nothing knew except to do his task : 1010
 And, clearly, now he grieves, sore vexed at heart,
 At all his faults, at all my sufferings.
 But thy base soul, that ever peeps and spies
 Through chinks and crannies, taught him but too well,
 Guileless and all unwilling as he was,
 The subtlety of fraud. And now thou think'st,
 O wretch, to bind and take me from these shores,
 Where thou did'st cast me forth, in friendless case,
 Lonely and homeless, dead to all that live.
 Perdition seize thee ! That I oft have prayed,
 But since the Gods grant nought that pleases me, 1020
 Thou laugh'st and liv'st, and I am vexed at heart
 At this same thing, that I live on in woe
 With many evils, flouted at by thee,
 And those two chiefs, the Atreidæ whom thou serv'st :
 And yet thou sailed'st with them by constraint,
 By tricks fast bound, while me, poor wretch, (who sailed
 With seven good ships, of mine own will,) they cast,
 (So thou say'st, but they say the deed was thine,)
 Dishonoured forth. And now why take ye me ?
 Why drag me off ? What aim have ye in this ?
 I, who am nothing, long since dead to you, 1030
 Yea, am I not, O thou abhorred of Gods,
 Lame, and ill-savoured ? How, if I should sail,
 Could ye unto the Gods burn sacrifice,
 Or pour libation ? 'Twas on that pretence
 Ye cast me forth. Perdition seize you all !
 And it shall seize you, seeing ye have wronged
 Him who stands here, if yet the Gods regard
 Or right, or truth. And full assured am I
 They do regard them. For ye ne'er had come

PHILOCTETES

On this your errand for a wretch like me,
 Unless the pricks of heaven-sent yearning for him .
 Had spurred you on. But, O my fatherland,
 And all ye Gods who look on me, avenge, 1040
 Avenge me on them all in time to come,
 If ye have pity on me. Piteously
 As now I live, if I could see them smitten,
 I then should deem my long disease was healed.

Chor. Sore vexed is he ; sore words the stranger speaks,
 Not yielding, O Odysseus, to his ills.

Odys. I might say much in answer to his words,
 If there were time. Now this one word I speak :
 Where men like this are wanted, such am I ;
 But when the time for good and just men calls, 1050
 Thou could'st not find a godlier man than me.
 In every case it is my bent to win ;
 Except with thee. To thee of mine own will
 I yield the victory. Ho, leave him there !
 Lay no hand on him, let him here remain.
 With these thy arms we have no need of thee :
 Teucros is with us, skilled in this thine art ;
 And I, too, boast that I, not less than thou,
 This bow can handle, with my hand shoot straight ;
 What need we thee ? In Lemnos walk at will ; 1060
 And let us go. And they perchance will give
 As prize to me what rightly thou might'st claim.

Phil. Ah me ! And what shall I, unhappy, do ?
 And wilt thou then among the Argives go,
 Equipped with my arms ?

Odys. Speak thou not a word
 To me, who stand in very act to go.

Phil. And thou, Achilles' son, shall I remain
 Without a word from thee ? Dost thou thus go ?

Odys. [*To NEOPROLEPOS.*] Go thou, and look not on
 him, lest, though noble,
 Thou ruin our success.

PHILOCTETES

Phil. [To Chorus.] And will ye leave,
O strangers, will ye leave me, pitying not? 1070

Chor. [To PHILOCTETES.] This youth is our com-
mander, and whate'er

He speaks to thee, the same we also say.

Neop. [To Chorus, *pointing to ODYSSEUS.*] I shall be
told, I know, by our chief here,

That I am piteous and of melting mood;

Yet, spite of this, remain, if so he will,

At least a while, until the sailors put

Our sailing gear in order, and we have made

Due prayers unto the Gods. So he, [*pointing to PHILOCTETES*] perchance,

Meantime may cherish better thoughts of us.

Now then, let us depart, and ye, be quick,

When we shall call you, to proceed with us. 1080

[*Exeunt* NEOPTOLEMOS and ODYSSEUS.]

STROPHE I

Phil. O cave of hollow rock,

Now hot, now icy cold,

And I was doomed, ah me!

To leave thee never more;

But e'en in death thou still wilt be to me

My one true helping friend.

O woe, woe, woe!

O home most full of grief,

My grief, me miserable!

What now shall come to me

As day succeeds to day?

Whence shall I, in my woe,

Find hope of food to live? 1090

Ah, now the swift-winged birds

*Will soar in loftiest flight,

*High through the whistling wind;

For I am powerless.

PHILOCTETES

Chor. Thou, thou thyself, O man of many woes,
Hast brought them on thyself ;
It is not from a Power above thine own
This ill fate falls on thee,
Since thou, when wisdom was at hand, didst choose,
Thy better genius scorned, to praise the worse. 1100

ANTISTROPHE I

Phil. O miserable me !
Outraged with foulest wrong,
Who for the years to come
In woe, no helper near,
Shall henceforth, dwelling here, consume away,
(Ah me ! ah me !)
Gaining no food for life
From those my swift-winged darts,
With firm hands grasping them ; 1110
But unsuspected words
Of guileful mind deceived ;
Would I might see the man
Whose heart devised these things,
Bearing these pains of mine
As long as I have borne !

Chor. Fate was it, fate that cometh of the Gods,
Not guile, that brought thee thus
Within my power ; on others launch thy curse, 1120
Baleful, and fraught with ill.
This is the care that I have most at heart,
That thou should'st not true friendship thrust aside.

STROPHE II

Phil. Ah, woe is me ! he sits,
Where the shore is white with waves,
And laughs within himself,
And tosses in his hands
What fed my wretched life,
By none else borne till now.

PHILOCTETES

O bow, of me beloved,
Torn from my loving grasp,
Surely, if thou can'st feel,
Thou lookest piteously 1120
On me, the bosom friend of Heracles,
Who never more shall bend thee as of old ;
But now thou changest hands,
Art wielded by a man of many wiles,
And seest foul deceits,
A man thou needs must loathe and execrate,
Ten thousand plots from shameful deeds upspringing,
*Such as none else contrived.
Chor. 'Tis a man's part to say that good is right, 1140
But having said it out,
Not to thrust forth his carping grief in speech.
He was but one, by many set to work,
And yielding to their will,
Hath wrought a common good for all his friends.

ANTISTROPHE II

Phil. O all ye wingèd game,
And tribes of bright-eyed deer,
Who on these high lawns fed,
No more from this my home
Will ye allure me forth. 1160
I wield not in my hands
The strength I had of old
(Ah me!) from those my darts ;
Full carelessly this place
Is barred against you now,
No longer fearful ; come ye, now 'tis well
That ye in turn should glut your ravenous maw
With this my spotted flesh.
Soon I shall end my life ; for whence can I
Find means withal to live ?
Who thus can feed upon the empty winds, 1180

PHILOCTETES

Gaining no more what earth brings forth to men,
The giver of their life ?

Chor. Ah, by the Gods, if thou dost still regard
A true friend's claim on thee,

Draw near to him who draweth near to thee
With every word of friendliness ; but know,

Know well, it rests with thee

To 'scape from this thy grief.

Sad is 't to feed that woe,

And, yet unschooled, to bear the thousand ills
That with it company.

Phil. Again, again thou hintest at a grief 1170
That vexed me sore long since ;

Thou best of all that ever tarried here,

Why did'st thou lay me low ? why work my doom ?

Chor. Why speak'st thou thus ?

Phil. In that thou thought'st to take me once again
To Troas, which I hate.

Chor. This seems to me far better.

Phil. Leave me ; leave.

Chor. Welcome, right welcome are the things thou
say'st.

And we desire to do them. Let us go,
Come, let us go, and each his own set place
Take in our ship. 1180

Phil. By Zeus, who hears

The prayers of those that curse, go not, I pray.

Chor. Be calm, be calm.

Phil. O friends, by all the Gods,

I pray you tarry.

Chor. Why this eager cry ?

Phil. Ah me ! ah me ! O God, O God, I die,
Die in my misery !

O foot, O foot, what shall I do with thee

Henceforth in this my woe ?

O friends, come back, and tarry once again. 1190

PHILOCTETES

Chor. What should we come to do
With any hope of altered purpose here,
Other than that thou showed'st to us before ?

Phil. Ye must not be too wroth
That one so tempest-tost with stormy grief
Should speak against his better, truer thoughts.

Chor. Come, then, poor sufferer, as we bid thee come.

Phil. Never, yea, nevermore, be sure of that ;
Not though the fiery thunderbolt that falls
With sudden blaze of light,

Should burn me with its dreaded lightning-flash.
Yea, perish Ilium ; with it perish there 1200
Those that could dare cast forth this foot of mine.
But oh, my friends, grant me at least one prayer.

Chor. What is 't thou askest ?

Phil. Give me but a sword,
If thou hast one, or axe, or any weapon.

Chor. What deed of prowess wilt thou work with them ?

Phil. I will strike off my head, and lop my limbs ;
My soul thirsts eagerly for blood, for blood.

Chor. But why is this ?

Phil. Lo, I my father seek. 1210

Chor. Where wilt thou go ?

Phil. To Hades, for he lives

No longer in this light.
O city, city of my fathers, fain,
All wretched though I be,
Fain would I see thee still !
I who thy sacred stream¹
Did leave to help my foes the Danaï ;
And now I am as nought.

Chor. Long since had I been making for my ship,
Had I not seen Odysseus drawing nigh, 1220
And, coming with him, great Achilles' son.

[PHILOCTETES retires into his cave.

¹ The "sacred stream" is the Spercheios. Comp. l. 726.
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PHILOCTETES

Enter NEOPTOLEMOS, *followed by* ODYSSEUS.

Odys. Wilt thou not tell me why so quick thou speed'st,

Turning thy steps upon a backward way ?

Neop. I go to undo the wrongs I did before.

Odys. Thou speakest strangely. And what wrong was there ?

Neop. That I, obeying thee and all the host

Odys. What did'st thou do that was not right for thee ?

Neop. I tricked a man with shameful fraud and guile.

Odys. Think what he was. What fancy strange is this ? [1230

Neop. 'Tis no strange fancy, but to Pœas' son

Odys. What wilt thou do ? A fear comes over me.

Neop. From whom I took this bow, to him again

Odys. O Zeus, what now ? Thou wilt not give it him ?

Neop. Yea, for I gained it basely, not of right.

Odys. By all the Gods, dost thou say this to mock me ?

Neop. If it be mockery but to speak the truth.

Odys. Son of Achilles, what is this thou say'st ?

Neop. Shall I then twice or thrice repeat the words ?

Odys. I had not wished to hear them even once.

Neop. Know, thou hast heard whate'er I had to say. 1240

Odys. There is one, yea, there is, will stop thy deed.

Neop. What say'st thou ? Who shall stop my doing it ?

Odys. The whole Achæan host, and I with them.

Neop. Wise though thou be, thou dost not wisely speak.

Odys. Thou neither speakest wise things nor devisest.

Neop. If they be just, then are they more than wise.

Odys. And how can it be just to cast away

That which my counsels gave thee ?

Neop. Having sinned

A shameful sin, I now would make amends.

PHILOCTETES

Odys. And fear'st thou not the Achæan host, doing
this ? 1250

Neop. My cause being just, I share not that thy fear ;
[*ODYSSEUS prepares to attack NEOFTOLEMON.*
Nor will I yield to this thy violence.

Odys. Not with the Trojans, then, I fight, but thee.

Neop. What must be, let it.

Odys. [*Laying hand on his sword.*] Ha ! And dost
thou see

My right hand grasp the hilt ?

Neop. [*Drawing his sword.*] See then that I
Can do the same as thou, in act, not threat.

Odys. I then will let thee go, but to the host
I will tell this, and they shall punish thee.

Neop. Thou 'rt wise in time ; and should'st thou keep
that mind,

Thou may'st perchance thy foot keep out of harm. 1260
[*ODYSSEUS retires.*

Ho, Philoctetes ! Ho there, Pœas' son,
Come forth, and leave this rocky roof of thine.

Phil. What noise of shouting make ye at my cave ?
Why call ye me ? What want ye, strangers, here ?
Alas, 'tis something evil. Are ye come
To bring fresh evils upon evils on me ?

Neop. Be of good cheer, and list to what I speak.

Phil. Nay, but I fear : 'twas by fair words before
That I fared foully, by thy words deceived.

Neop. And is repentance, then, impossible ? 1270

Phil. Such wast thou then, when thou did'st steal my
bow,

Faithful in words, within all treacherous.

Neop. But not so now : I wish to hear from thee,
Whether thy mind is fixed to tarry here,
Or sail with us.

Phil. Stop, stop ; not one word more :
All that thou speakest will be said in vain.

PHILOCTETES

Neop. Is this thy mind ?

Phil. Yet stronger than I speak.

Neop. I would that thou had'st hearkened to my words ;
But if I chance to speak unseasonably,
I hold my peace.

Phil. Thou wilt say all in vain, 1280
For never shalt thou turn my mind to thee,
Who, taking from me that which gave me life,
Did'st basely rob me of it, and now com'st,
And givest me thy counsel, basest son
Of noblest father. May ye perish all,
And chiefly the Atreidæ ; after them,
Laertes' son and thou !

Neop. [*Holding out the bow.*] Curse thou no more,
But from my hand receive these weapons back.

Phil. How say'st thou ? Are we tricked a second
time ?

Neop. No, by the holy might of highest Zeus !

Phil. O words most welcome, if they be but true ! 1290

Neop. Our acts shall make them clear ; do thou put
forth

Thy right hand, and be master of thine arms.

[*As he is giving the bow, ODYSSEUS appears
from behind.*]

Odys. That I forbid, the Gods my witnesses,
In name of the Atreidæ, and the host.

Phil. Whose voice, my son, was that ? What ? Did I
hear

Odysseus speak ?

Odys. E'en so, thou see'st him near,
Who by main force will bear thee off to Troy,
Whether Achilles' son shall please or no.

Phil. [*Bending his bow.*] But to thy cost, if this dart
does not miss.

Neop. [*Staying his arm.*] Oh, by the Gods, I pray thee
shoot it not ! 1300

PHILOCTETES

Phil. Let loose my hand, I pray thee, dearest boy.

Neop. I will not let thee go.

Phil. Fie on thee! Why

Did'st hinder me from slaying with my dart

A man I hate, my bitter enemy?

[*ODYSSEUS steals away.*]

Neop. That were not good for me, nor yet for thee.

Phil. Know this then, that the chief of all the host,
The Achæans' lying heralds, they are cowards
In brunt of fight, though overbold of speech.

Neop. Well, be it so. But thou hast now thy bow,
And hast no cause for wrath or blaming me.

Phil. I own it. Thou, dear boy, hast shown the
stock

From which thou springest, not from Sisyphe, 1310
But from Achilles, who alive was held
Of highest fame, and is so with the dead.

Neop. It gives me joy to hear thee praise my father,
Praising me also; but what now I wish
Hear thou, I pray thee. Mortals needs must bear
The chances which the Gods on high shall give;

But those who fall upon self-chosen ills,
As thou hast fallen, they have little claim
To pardon or compassion. Thou art fierce, 1320
And wilt not list to one who counsels thee;
And if one give advice in pure good will,
Thou hatest him, and deemest him a foe.

Yet I will speak, invoking holy Zeus,
The guardian of all oaths. Be sure of this,
And write it in the tablets of thy mind,
Thy pain has come to thee by heaven-sent chance,
In that thou cam'st too near to Chryse's guard,
The serpent who in secret keeps his watch
Over the unroofed precincts of her shrine;
And know that thou shalt find no respite here
From this thy sore disease, while yet yon sun. 1330

PHILOCTETES

Rises on this side, sets again on that,
Until thou journey of thine own free will
To Troïa's plains, and meeting there with those
Who call Asclepios father,¹ shalt be healed
Of thy disease, and shalt with these thy darts,
And with my help, lay low its ancient Towers.
And I will tell thee how I know these things
Stand thus ordained ; for we a prophet have,
Taken from Troïa, noblest seer of all,
And Helenos his name, who clearly saith
That these things so must be ; and further yet,
That it is doomed, this very harvest tide,
That Troïa should be taken utterly ;
And should he prove false prophet, in our hands
He placed his life. And since thou knowest this,
Of thy free will consent ; for great the gain,
Being judged the noblest one of Hellenes all,
To find skilled hands to heal thee, and to gain,
Sacking loud-wailing Troïa, highest praise.

1340

Phil. O hateful life, why, why detain'st thou me
In day's clear light, and dost not let me go
To Hades dark ? Ah me ! what shall I do ?
How shall I prove distrustful to his words,
Who gives me counsel out of kindly thought ?
Yet must I yield ? And how shall I, ill-starred,
Do this, and then look up ? From whom shall I
Hear greeting kind ? How will ye, O mine eyes,
That watch all varying chances of my life,
How will ye bear to see me living on
With those Atreidæ who have ruined me,
Or with that vilest son of Lartios ?
It is not now the sorrow of the past
That chiefly gnaws, but what I seem to see
With prophet's glance I yet am doomed to bear

1350

¹ The two sons of Asclepios, Machaon and Podaleirios, appear in the *Iliad* (ii. 731) as the great surgeons of the Hellenic army.

PHILOCTETES

From these same foes ; for those whose soul becomes 1266

Mother of evil, them it trains to be

Evil in all things. And 'tis this that moves

My wonder at thee ; for 'twas meet that thou

Should'st ne'er to Troïa come thyself, and next

Should'st keep us from them who so outraged thee,

And robbed thee of thy father's treasured arms,

[And slighting Aias, to Odysseus gave them ;]

*And art thou their ally, and wilt constrain

Me to their will ? Nay, nay, not so, my son ;

But, as thou swarest, send me to my home,

While thou, in Skyros tarrying, leavest them,

Evil of heart, to die an evil death.

And thus wilt thou gain double thanks from me, 1270

And double from my father, nor wilt seem,

Helping the base, to be as base thyself.

Neop. Thou speakest what shows fair, and yet I wish

That thou should'st trust the Gods, and these my
words,

And sail from these shores, I thy friend with thee.

Phil. What ! with this wretched foot to Troïa's
plains,

And Atreus' son, my bitterest foe of all ?

Neop. Nay, but to those who 'll free thy ulcerous foot

From pain, and save thee from thy sore disease.

Phil. What mean'st thou, friend, who givest counsel
strange ? 1280

Neop. That which I see works best for both of us.

Phil. Hast thou no awe of Gods, who say'st such
words !

Neop. What cause of shame is there in gaining
good ?

Phil. And speak'st thou of the Atreidæ's good, or
mine ?

Neop. Thine, for I am thy friend, and such my
speech.

PHILOCTETES

Phil. How so, when thou would'st give me to my
foes ?

Neop. Learn thou, my friend, to be less rash in ills.

Phil. I know thou wilt destroy me with these words.

Neop. Nay, nay, not so ; thou dost not understand.

Phil. Do I not know the Atreidæ cast me forth ? 1300

Neop. But if they save, who cast thee forth, look to it.

Phil. Ne'er with my will shall I on Troia look.

Neop. What then remains, if we, with all our words,
Still fail to move thee ? Easiest course it were
For me to cease from speaking, and that thou
Should'st live, as now, without deliverance.

Phil. Leave me to suffer what I suffer must ;
But what thou swarest, thy right hand as pledge,
To lead me to my home, that do, my son,
And linger not, nor further mention make
Of Troia to me. I have had my fill
Of wailing and lament.

1400

Neop. If this thy will,
Come, let us go.

Phil. Now speak'st thou noble words.

Neop. Plant thy foot firm.

Phil. With what small strength I have.

Neop. How shall I 'scape the Achæans' blame ?

Phil. Despise it.

Neop. And what if they shall lay my country waste ?

Phil. I shall be there.

Neop. What would thy help avail ?

Phil. With these the darts of Heracles. . . .

Neop. What then ?

Phil. I will restrain their coming.

Neop. On then, take
Thy farewell of this island.

HERACLES appears, descending from the sky, in glory.

Hera. Nay, not yet ;

PHILOCTETES

Not till thou hear our words,
 Thou son of Pœas old ; 1410
 Own that thou hear'st the voice of Heracles
 And look'st upon his face.
 Lo, for thy sake I come,
 Leaving my heavenly home,
 To tell thee of the thoughts of Zeus on high,
 And to close up the way 7
 On which thou journeyest now.
 List thou to these my words :
 And first my own life's chances I will tell,
 The labours I endured, through which I passed
 And gained immortal greatness as thou see'st : 1420
 And this, be sure, shall be thy destined lot,
 After these woes to live a noble life ;
 And going with this youth to Troia's town,
 First thou shalt respite find from thy sore plague,
 And for thy valour chosen from the host,
 Shalt with my arrows take away the life
 Of Paris, who was cause of all these ills,
 And shalt sack Troia, and shalt send its spoils
 To thine own dwelling (gaining highest prize
 Of valour in the army) by the plains
 Of Cœta, where thy father Pœas dwells. 1430
 And all the spoils thou gainest in this war,
 As true thank-offerings for these darts of mine,
 Lay thou upon my grave. And now [To NEOPTOLEMOS]
 to thee,
 Achilles' son, I this declare ;—nor thou,
 Apart from him, nor he apart from thee,
 May Troia take. But ye, as lions twain
 That roam together, guard thou him, he thee.
 And I will send, [To PHILOCTETES] as healer of thy
 wounds,
 Asclepios to Ilion. Yet once more
 By this my bow must it be captured. Then,

PHILOCTETES

(Give heed to this,) when ye the land lay waste, 1440
Shew all religious reverence to the Gods ;
For all things else our father Zeus counts less :
[Religion e'en in death abides with men ;
Die they or live, it does not pass away.]

Phil. O thou, who utterest voice,
By me long yearnèd for,
Who now at length art seen,
I will not to thy words rebellious prove.

Neop. I too give my assent.

Hera. Delay not now to act ; 1450
For time and wind press on,
And speed you on your way.

Phil. Come, then, I leave this isle,
And speak my parting words.

Farewell, O roof, long time
My one true guard and friend ;
And ye, O nymphs that sport
In waters or in fields ;

Strong roar of waves that break
On jutting promontory,

Where oft my head was wet,
(Though hid in far recess,)

With blasts of stormy South ;
And oft the mount that bears

The name of Hermes¹ gave

Its hollow, loud lament, 1460

Echoing my stormy woe ;

And now, ye streams and fount,

Lykian, where haunt the wolves,

We leave you, leave you now,

Who ne'er had dreamt of this.

Farewell, O Lemnos, girt by waters round,
With fair breeze send me on

¹ Hermes, as one of the Cabeiri, the special deities of Lemnos and Imbros.

PHILOCTETES

Right well, that none may blame,
Where Fate, the mighty, leads,
Counsel of friends, and God,
Who worketh this in might invincible.

Chor. On then, with one accord,
To the sea Nymphs offering our prayer,
That they come as helpers and friends,
In the voyage of the homeward bound.

1470



FRAGMENTS

11¹

HAST thou done fearful evil? Thou must bear
Evil as fearful; and the holy light
Of righteousness shines clearly.

12

Kings wisdom gain, consorting with the wise.

13

Man is but breath and shadow, nothing more.

14

The mightiest and the wisest in their minds
Thou may'st see like to him who standeth here,
Giving good counsel to a man distressed;
But when God's will shall send the scourge on one
Who lived till then as fortune's favourite,
All his fine phrases vanish utterly.

35

'Neath every stone there lies a scorpion hid.

58

Hark! some one cries. . . . Or do I vainly call?
The man who fears hears noise on every side.

59

Be sure, no lie can ever reach old age.

¹ The numerals refer to Dindorf's Edition.

FRAGMENTS

61

A maiden too, and one of Argive race,
Whose glory lies in fewest words or none.

62

Short speech becomes the wise of heart and good
To parents who begat and bore and bred.

63

Be of good cheer, O lady : dangers oft,
Though blowing dreams by night, are lulled by day.

64

None cleave to life so fondly as the old.

65

Life, O my son, is sweetest boon of all :
It is not given to men to taste death twice.

66

*The living should not glory o'er the dead,
As knowing well that he himself must die.

67

How all men seek to shun the tyrant's face !

88

A soul with good intent and purpose just
Discerns far more than lecturer can teach.

89

Much wisdom often goes with fewest words.

90

A man whose whole delight is still to talk
Knows not how much he vexes all his friends.

FRAGMENTS

91

If thou art noble, as thou say'st thyself,
Tell me from whence thou 'rt sprung. No speech can
stain

What comes of noble nature, nobly born.

92

Thy speech is worthy, not too harshly said ;
A noble stock that bears the test of proof,
Will still gain fair repute beyond all blame.

93

Who can count man's prosperity as great,
Or small and lowly, or of no account ?
None of all this continues in one stay.

94

Strange is it that the godless, who have sprung
From evil-doers, should fare prosperously,
While good men, born of noble stock, should be
By adverse fortune vexed. It was ill done
For the Gods thus to order lives of men.
What ought to be is this, that godly souls
Should from the Gods gain some clear recompense,
And the unjust pay some clear penalty ;
So none would prosper who are base of soul.

98

Then does men's life become one vast disease,
When once they seek their ills by ills to cure.

99

Not easy is it to resist the just.

100

Deceit is base, unfit for noble souls,

FRAGMENTS

101

A righteous tongue has with it mightiest strength.

102

Hush, boy ! for silence brings a thousand gains.

103

Why tellest thou thy tale of many words ?
Superfluous speech is irksome everywhere.

104

In some things be not anxious to inquire :
Far better is it oft to leave them hid.

105

I know not how to answer to these things.
When good men by the base
Are overcome in strife,
What city could endure such deeds as this ?

106

No one, I trow ; yet take good heed to this,
Lest it be better, e'en by godless deeds,
To triumph over foes than as a slave
To yield obedience.

107

Cease thou. Enough for me the name of son
Of such a father, if indeed I 'm his :
And if I be not, small the injury ;
Repute oft triumphs o'er the truth itself.

108

The bastard is as strong as lawful sons ;
Goodness still claims a rank legitimate.

109

Riches gain friends, gain honours,—further still,
Gain highest sovereignty for those who sit

FRAGMENTS

In low estate.* The rich have no men foes ;
And if they have, these still conceal their hate.
A wondrous power has wealth to wind its way
Or on plain ground, or heights that none may tread,
Where one that's poor, although 'twere close at hand
Would fail to gain the thing his heart desires.
The form unsightly and of no esteem
It makes both wise of speech and fair to see :
It only has the power of joy or grief,
It only knows the art of hiding ill.

162

A pleasant ill is this disease of love,
And 'twere not ill to sketch its likeness thus :
When sharp cold spreads through all the æther clear,
And children seize a crystal icicle,
At first they firmly hold their new-found joy ;
But in the end the melting mass nor cares
To slip away, nor is it good to keep :
So those that love, the self-same strong desire
Now leads to action, now to idleness.

202

What virtue gains alone abides with us.

203

The hearts of good men are not quickly bowed.

204

Still where the right of free, true speech is gone,
And the worse counsel in a state prevails,
Blunders make shipwreck of security.

205

And how can I, a mortal, fight with fate
That comes from heaven, when danger presses hard,
And hope helps not ?

163

FRAGMENTS

206

*Since age is on thee, keep { its fair repute.
 { from evil speech. '

209

The tongue is held in honour by such men
As reckon words of more account than deeds.

235

Come, let us quickly go : it cannot be
That any blame should fall on righteous haste.

236

It brings some pain, I know, but one must try,
As best one may, to bear the ills of life.
Needs must we find some healing from these things.

237

Some pleasure is there found even in words,
When with them comes forgetfulness of ills.

238

Though I be old, yet with advance of age
Comes reason's growth, and skill to counsel well.

239

 There stretcheth by the sea
A fair Eubæan shore, and o'er it creeps
The vine of Bæchos, each day's growth complete.
In morning brightness all the land is green
With tendrils fair and spreading. Noontide comes,
* And then the unripe cluster forms apace :
The day declines, and purple grow the grapes ;
At eve the whole bright vintage is brought in,
And the mixed wine poured out.

FRAGMENTS

255

I own it true. Right well the proverb runs,
That smallest things make known a man's true bent.

284

Wherefore conceal thou nothing. Time that sees
And heareth all things bringeth all to light.

288

No good e'er comes of leisure purposeless ;
And Heaven ne'er helps the men who will not act.

298

'Tis only in God's garden men may reap
True joy and blessing.

302

Chance never helps the men who do not work.

304

He who neglects the Muses in his youth
Has wasted all the past, and lost true life
For all the future.

311

A mortal man should think things fit for men.

321

This is most grievous, when it might be ours
To set things straight, and we by our own act
Will bring fresh woe and trouble on our heads.

322

But he who dares to look at danger straight,
His speech is clear, his spirit falters not.

165

FRAGMENTS

323

It is not good to lie ; but when the truth
Brings on a man destruction terrible,
He may be pardoned though not good his speech.

325

And wonder not, O prince, that thus I cling
So close to gain ; for they whose life is 'ng
Still cleave to profit with their might and main,
And men count all things else as less than wealth ;
And though there be that praise a life kept free
From all disease, to me no poor man seems
In that blest state, but sick continually.

326

The noblest life is that of righte
The best, one free from sick
To have each day the fill of

Now in the gates Æneas, who
Is seen, and on his shoulder
Who lets his byssine mantle fall in folds
On back where smote the fier
And gathers round him
Beyond all hope, the mult
Of Phrygians who would fain be enigrants.

343

But little count we make of toil gone by.

358

For those who fare but ill 'tis very sweet
E'en for a moment to forget their ills.

359

None has no sorrow ; happiest who has least.

FRAGMENTS

379

He' 'twas that taught the Argive army first
To build their walls, and found inventions strange
Of measures, weights, and numbers ; he the first
To plan the ten that upward rise from one,
And from the tens to fifties pass, and so
From thence to thousands. He alone devised
The army's beacon-lights and nightly watch,
And signals of the morning, and made clear
What he did not devise. He brought to sight
The measures and the motions of the stars,
And all their order, and the heavenly signs,
And for the men who guide their ships on sea,
The Great Bear's circuit and the Dog's cold setting.

380

Did he not devise a way to win the nine from them ;
And, with God's help, discover pastimes wise,
As they said downy, and long toil at sea—
Draughts, and dice too, and rest for idleness ?

419

But when are our adders the soul
made more careful, having her to shun
Both blame and death, and in against the Gods.

434

The aged man becomes a child again.

436

'Tis better not to be than vilely live.

498

War ever takes our young men in its net.

¹ Palamedes.

FRAGMENTS

499

A weary life is that the sailors lead,
To whom no gift from Heaven or Fortune sent
Could offer worthy recompense. Poor souls,
Adventuring traffic far on slender chance,
They save, or gain, or lose all utterly.

500

All evil things are found in length of years;
Sense gone, work useless, thoughts and counsels vain.

501

If men by tears could heal their several ills,
And by their weeping bring the dead to life,
Then gold would be of far less price than tears.

512

Greedy of gain is every barbarous tribe.

513

Be not afraid : speak thou the truth, and then
Thou shalt not fail.

514

What man soe'er, in troubles waxing wroth,
Will use a cure that's worse than the disease,
Is no physician skilled to deal with grief.

517

I by myself am nought ; yea, oftentimes
So look I upon all our womankind,
That we are nothing. Young, we lead a life
Of all most joyous, in our father's house,
For want of knowledge is our kindly nurse ;
But when we come to marriageable years,
Then are we pushed and bartered for away

FRAGMENTS

From household gods and from our parents dear—
Some unto alien husbands, some to men
Of stranger race, and some to homes full strange,
Or full of turmoil : and when one night binds us,
We needs must bear, and think of it as right.

518

Among mankind we all are born alike
Of father and of mother. None excels
Another in his nature, but the fate
Of evil chance holds some of us, and some
Good fortune favours, and necessity
Holds some in bondage.

520

Praise no man much until thou see his death.

535

Within the tablets of thy mind write this
That I have said to thee.

563

Well, well, what greater joy could'st thou receive
Than touching land, and then, beneath a roof,
With slumbering mind to hear the pelting storm ?

572

We should not speak of one that prospers well
As happy, till his life have run its course,
And reached its goal. An evil spirit's gift
In shortest time has oft laid low the state
Of one full rich in great prosperity,
When the change comes, and so the Gods appoint.

582

No one who sins against his will is base.

FRAGMENTS

585

Tell not to many what Fate sends on thee :
'Tis comelier far in silence to lament.

588

I mourn for those my locks as young mare doth,
Who, caught by shepherds, in the stable stands,
And with rough hands has all her chestnut mane
Cropped off, and then is led in meadow fair,
Which clear streams water, and when thus she sees
Her likeness, with her hair thus foully cropped,
Ah, one hard-hearted well might pity her,
Crouching in shame, as maddened with disgrace,
Mourning and weeping o'er the mane that 's gone.

606

Ne'er can a state be well and safely ruled,
In which all justice and all purity
Are trampled under foot, and brawling knave
With cruel goad drives the poor state to death.

607

Not mortal men alone does Love assail,
No, nor yet women, but it leaves its stamp
Upon the souls of Gods, and passes on
To mighty ocean. Zeus omnipotent
Is powerless to avert it, and submits
And yields full willingly.

608

No greater evil can a man endure
Than a bad wife, nor find a greater good
Than one both good and wise ; and each man speaks
As judging by the experience of his life.

609

Forgive me, and be silent, patiently ;

FRAGMENTS

For that which to us women bringeth shame
One ought in women's presence to conceal.

610

Would'st thou count up the roll of happy men,
Thou shalt not find one mortal truly blest.

611

Ah, women ! no one can escape disgrace
On whom Zeus sendeth ills in armed array ;
And heaven-sent plagues we still must bear perforce.

612

Sons are the anchors of a mother's life.

622

Thou art but young ; and thou hast much to learn,
And many things to hear and understand
Seek still to add fresh knowledge profitable.

626

Death comes, the last great healer of all ills.

649

Ah, boy ! 'tis just the noble and the good
That Ares loves to slay. The bold in tongue,
Shunning all pain, are out of danger's reach ;
For Ares careth not for coward souls.

657

Time, stripping off the veil, brings all to light.

658

Time, even Time, in all the vast expanse
Of this our human life,
Finds plenteous wisdom for the souls that seek.

FRAGMENTS

659

But when the Gods would hide the things of heaven,
Thou can'st not learn, although thou travel far.

660

One wise man is no match for many fools.

661

A good man still will succour the distressed.

662

True wisdom ranks among the Gods most high.

663

They that fare ill become not only deaf,
But, even though they gaze, they see not clear
What lies before them.

.

Sore evil still, and all unmanageable,
Is want of knowledge. Folly proves itself
Of wickedness true sister.

664

We cannot speak good words of deeds not good.

665

We should not joy in pleasures that bring shame.

• 666

Fortune ne'er helps the man whose courage fails.

667

Shame brings but little help in evil things;
Your silence is the talker's best ally.

FRAGMENTS

668

What means this praise? The man who yields to wine
Is void of understanding, slave to wrath,
And wont, though babbling many words and vain,
To hear full loth what eagerly he spoke.

669

When one is found as taken in the act
Of fraud and wrong, whate'er his skill of speech,
The only course for him is silence then ;
Yet that is hard to bear for one who feels
Conscious of innocence.

670

In vows, forsooth, a woman shuns the pangs
And pains of childbirth ; but the evil o'er,
Once more she comes within the self-same net,
O'ercome by that strong passion of her soul.

671

No oath weighs aught on one of scoundrel soul.

672

When trouble ceases e'en our troubles please.

674

**Where fathers are by children overcome,
That is no city of the wise and good,**

'Tis best, where'er we are, to follow still
The customs of the country.

675

He to whom men pay honour's noble meed
Has need of noble deeds innumerable,
And out of easy conflict there can come
But little glory.

FRAGMENTS

676

Counsels are mightier things than strength of hands.

677

My body is enslaved, my mind is free.

678

Not Kyprian only, children, is she called,
Who rules o'er Kypros, but bears many names.
Hades is she, and Might imperishable,
And raving Madness, and untamed Desire,
And bitter Lamentation. All is hers,
Or earnest, or in calm, or passionate ;
For still where'er is life she winds within
The inmost heart. Where finds this Goddess not
Her easy prey ? She masters all the tribe
Of fish that swim the waters, she prevails
O'er all four-footed beasts that walk the earth.
Her wing directs the course of wandering birds,
Mighty o'er beasts, and men, and Gods above.
What God in wrestling throws she not thrice o'er ?
Yea, if 'twere lawful to speak all the truth,
She sways the breast of Zeus. All weaponless,
Without or spear or sword, the Kyprian queen
Cuts short the schemes of mortals or of Gods.

679

What house hath ever gained prosperity,
How swoln soe'er with pride, without the grace
Of woman's nobler nature.

680

But when bereavement falls upon her house,
A woman has the purpose of a man.

681

No small disease is poverty for those

FRAGMENTS

Who boast of wealth ; than poverty no foe
Is found more hostile.

682

O race of mortal men oppressed with care !
What nothings are we, like to shadows vain,
Cumbering the ground, and wandering to and fro !

683

None but the Gods may live untouched by ill.

684

O God, we mortals find no way to flee
From evils deeply-rooted, sent from Heaven.

685

Would one might live, and give the present hour
Its fill of pleasure, while the future creeps
For ever unforeseen.

686

The skilful gamester still should make the best
Of any throw, and not bemoan his luck.

687

Tis hope that feeds the larger half of men.

688

Ne'er can the wise grow old, in whom there dwells
A soul sustained with light of Heaven's own day :
Great gain to men is forethought such as theirs.

689

He who in midst of woes desireth life,
Is either coward or insensible.

690

A. Now he is dead, I yearn to die with him.
B. Why such hot haste ? Thou needs must meet thy fate.

FRAGMENTS

691

Truth evermore surpasseth words in might.

694

A woman's oaths I write upon the waves.

701

To drink against one's will
Is not less evil than unwilling thirst.

702

If thou should'st bring all wisdom of the wise
To one who thirsts, thou could'st not please him more
Than giving him to drink.

703

Most basely wilt thou die by doom of Heaven,
Who, being as thou art, dost still drain off
Thy pottle-deep potations.

705

This wanton insolence
Is never brought to self-control in youth,
But still among the young bursts out, and then
Tames down and withers.

707

I know that God is ever such as this,
Darkly disclosing counsels to the wise ;
But to the simple, speaking fewest words,
Plain teacher found.

709

Thou shalt find a God
Who knoweth not of charity or grace,
But loves strict justice, that and that alone.

FRAGMENTS

711

Whoso will enter in a monarch's house
Is but his bond-slave, though he come as free.

713

In many a turning of the wheel of God
My fate revolves and changes all its mood ;
E'en as the moon's face never keepeth still
For but two nights in one position fixed,
But from its hiding-place first comes as new,
With brightening face, and thenceforth waxeth full ;
And when it gains its noblest phase of all,
Wanes off again, and comes to nothingness.

714

Counsel of evil travelleth all too quick.

715

If any man beginneth all things well,
The chances are his ends agree thereto.

717

Words that are false bring forth no fruit at all.

718

Though one be poor, his fame may yet stand high.

Not one whit worse the poor whose heart is wise.

What profit is there from our many goods,
If care, with evil thoughts,
Is still the nurse of fair prosperity ?

719

Thrice happy they, who, having seen these rites,
Then pass to Hades : there to these alone
Is granted life, all others evil find.

FRAGMENTS

723

What may be taught I learn ; what may be found
That I still seek for ; what must come by prayer,
For that I asked the Gods.

724

Go forth, ye people strong of hand, to work,
Who with your balanced baskets of first-fruits
Worship the Working Goddess, child of Zeus,
Whose eyes are dread to look on.

725

And dost thou mourn the death of mortal man,
Not knowing if the future bringeth gain ?

727

Thou waxest wanton, like a high-fed colt ;
For maw and mouth are glutted with excess.

732

Searching out all things, thou in most men's acts
Wilt find but baseness.

•

739

Unlooked-for things must once for all begin.

741

Those who lose such friends lose them to their joy,
And they who have them for deliverance pray.

749

This is the gift of God, and what the Gods
Shall give, we men, my child, should never shun.

762

An old man's wrath is like ill-tempered scythe,
Sharp to begin, but quickly blunted off.

FRAGMENTS

763

The dice of Zeus have ever lucky throws.

772

Be pitiful, O Sun,
Whom the wise name as father of the Gods,
Author of all things.

779

Since we have rightly made our prayer to God,
Let us now go, O boys, to where the wise
Impart their knowledge of the Muses' arts.
Each day we need to take some forward step,
Till we gain power to study nobler things.
Evil a boy will learn without a guide,
With little labour, learning from himself;
But good, not even with his teacher near,
Dwells in his soul, but is full hardly gained :
Let us then, boys, be watchful, and work hard,
Lest we should seem with men untaught to rank
The children of a father far from home.

780

The gratitude of one whose memory fails
Is quickly gone.

**RHYMED CHORAL ODES
AND
LYRICAL DIALOGUES**

ŒDIPUS THE KING

151-215

STROPHE I

WHAT wert thou, O thou voice
Of Zeus, thou bad'st rejoice,
Floating to Thebes from Pytho gold-abounding ?
I tremble ; every sense
Thrills with the dread suspense ;
(O Delian Pæan, hear our cries resounding !)
My soul is filled with fears,
What thou wilt work on earth,
Or now or in the circling years ;—
Speak, child of golden Hope, thou Voice of heavenly birth !

ANTISTROPHE I

Athena, first of all,
Thee, child of Zeus, I call,
And Artemis thy sister with us dwelling,
Whom, on her glorious throne,
Our agora doth own,
And Phœbos in the archer's skill excelling ;
Come, O ye Guardians three,
If e'er in days of yore
Ye bade the tide of evil flee,
Drive off this fiery woe as once ye drove before.

STROPHE II

Yea come ; for lo ! I fail
To tell my woes' vast tale ;
For all my host in fear and sickness languish,

ŒDIPUS THE KING

And weapons fail each mind ;
For the earth's increase kind
Is gone, and women faint in childbirth's anguish :
Thou see'st men, one by one,
Like bird of fleetest wing,
Swifter than flashing ray of sun,
Pass to His gloomy shore who reigns of darkness King.

ANTISTROPHE II

Countless the spoil of death ;
Our city perisheth,
And on the tainted earth our infants lie ;
The tender heart is cold,
And wives and matrons old,
Now here, now there, by every altar cry.
And clear the Pæans gleam,
And chants of sorrow born ;
O golden child of Zeus supreme,
Put forth thy power to help, bright-eyed as is the morn !

STROPHE III

And Ares, mighty One,
Who weaponless comes on,
And fierce and hot with battle-cry assaileth,—
Bid him in flight to tread
By Amphitrite's bed,
Or Thrakia's homeless coast where wild wave wailleth.
If aught is spared by night,
It droops before the day ;
O Thou who wield'st the lightning's blazing might,
O Zeus our Father, dart thy thunder him to slay !

ANTISTROPHE III

And oh ! Lykeian king,
That from thy gold-wrought string
Thy arrows might go forth in strength excelling ;

ŒDIPUS THE KING

And all the flashing rays
That Artemis displays,
Who on the Lykian mountains hath her dwelling !
Thee, Bacchos, I invoke,
Whose name our land hath borne,
Come, wine-flushed, gold-crowned, Mænad-girt,
with smoke
Of blazing torch against that God, of Gods the scorn.

462-511

STROPHE I

Who was it that the rock of Delphos named,
In speech oracular,
That wrought with bloody hands his deeds dark-shamed ?
Well may he wander far,
With footstep swifter and more strong
Than wind-winged steed that flies along ;
For on him leaps, in Heaven's own panoply,
With fire and flash, the son of Zeus most High,
And with Him, dread and fell,
The dark Fates follow, irresistible.

ANTISTROPHE I

For 'twas but now from out the snowy height
Of old Parnassos shone
The Voice that bade us all to bring to light
The unknown guilty one ;
Each forest wild, each rocky shore,
Like untamed bull, he wanders o'er,
In dreary loneliness with dreary tread,
Seeking to shun dark oracles and dread,
From Delphi's central shrine ;
And yet they hover round with life and strength divine.

STROPHE II

Dread things, yea, dread the augur wise hath stirred :
I know not or to answer Aye, or No ;

ŒDIPUS THE KING

In vain, perplexed, I seek the fitting word,
And lost in fears nor past nor future know :
What cause of strife so fell
Between the son of Polybos hath come,
And those, the heirs of old Labdakid home,
I have found none to tell :
From none comes well-tried word,
That I should war against the glory great
Of Œdipus my lord,
Or make myself the avenger of an unknown fate.

ANTISTROPHE II

Yet Zeus and King Apollo, they are wise,
And know the secret things that mortals do ;
But that a prophet sees with clearer eyes
Than these I see with, is no judgment true.
Though one in wisdom high
May wisdom of another far excel ;
Yet I, until I see it 'stablished well,
Will ne'er take up the cry :
One thing is clear, she came,
The wingèd maiden,—and men found him wise ;
Our city hailed his name,
And from my heart the charge of baseness ne'er shall
rise.

863-910

STROPHE I

Would 'twere my lot to lead
My life in holiest purity of speech,
In purity of deed,
Of deed and word whose Laws high-soaring reach
Through all the vast concave,
Heaven-born, Olympos their one only sire !
To these man never gave
The breath of life, nor shall they e'er expire

ŒDIPUS THE KING

In dim oblivion cold :
In these God shews as great and never waxeth old.

ANTISTROPHE I

The wantonness of pride
Begets the tyrant,—wanton pride, full-flushed
With thoughts vain, idle, wide,
That to the height of topmost fame hath rushed,
And then hath fallen low,
Into dark evil where it cannot take
One step from out that woe.
I cannot bid the Gods this order break
Of toil for noblest end ;
Yea, still I call on God as guardian and as friend.

STROPHE II

But if there be who walks too haughtily
In action or in speech,
Who the great might of Justice dares defy,
Whom nought can reverence teach,
Ill fate be his for that his ill-starred scorn,
Unless he choose to win
Henceforth the gain that is of Justice born,
And holds aloof from sin,
Nor lays rash hand on things inviolable.
Who now will strive to guard
His soul against the darts of passion fell ?
If such deeds gain reward,
What boots it yet again
In choral dance to chant my wonted strain ?

ANTISTROPHE II

No more will I at yonder spot divine,
Earth's centre, kneeling fall,
In Abæ's temple, or Olympia's shrine,
Unless, in sight of all,

ŒDIPUS THE KING

These things appear as tokens clear and true.
But oh, Thou Lord and King,
If unto Thee that name be rightly due,
Creation governing,
Let it not 'scape Thee, or thy deathless might !
For now the words of old
To Laios uttered, they despise and slight ;
Nor does Apollo hold
His place in men's esteem,
And things divine are counted as a dream.

1186-1223

STROPHE I

O race of mortal men,
I number you and deem
That ye, although ye live,
Are but an empty dream.
What man, yea, what, knows more
Of happiness and peace,
Than just the idle show,
And then the sure decrease ?
Thy face as pattern given,
O Œdipus, my king,
Thy doom, yea thine, I say,
I know of none I count as truly prospering.

ANTISTROPHE I

Thou, once with strange success,
As archer taking aim,
Did'st hit the mark in all,
Great riches and great fame :
And did'st, (O Zeus !) lay low
The maiden skilled in song,
The monster terrible,
With talons crook'd and long.

ŒDIPUS THE KING

Thou against death wast seen
Thy country's sure defence ;
And therefore thou art king ;
To thee the Lord of Thebes we all our homage bring.

STROPHE II

And who of all men is more wretched now ?
Who dwells with woe perpetually as thou,
In chance and change of life,
() Œdipus renowned, for whom was won
The same wide haven, sheltering sire and son ?
Ah how, O mother-wife,
Could that defiled bed, when he had come,
Receive him and be dumb ?

ANTISTROPHE II

Time, the all-seeing, finds thee out at last,
And passes sentence on the hateful past,
The wedlock none might wed,
Where son and spouse in strange confusion met.
Ah, son of Laios, would I could forget !
In one true word, thy succour gave me breath,
By thee I sleep in death.

ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS.

668-718

STROPHE I

Yes, thou art come, O guest,
Where our dear land is brightest of the bright,
Land in its good steeds blest,
Our home, Colonos, gleaming fair and white,
The nightingale still haunteth all our woods
Green with the flush of spring,
And sweet melodious floods
Of softest song through grove and thicket ring;
She dwelleth in the shade
Of glossy ivy, dark as purpling wine,
And the untrodden glade
Of trees that hang their myriad fruit divine,
Unscathed by blast of storm;
Here Dionysos finds his dear-loved home,
Here, revel-flushed, his form
Is wont with those his fair nurse-nymphs to roam.

ANTISTROPHE I

Here, as Heaven drops its dew,
Narcissus grows with fair bells clustered o'er,
Wreath to the Dread Ones due,
The Mighty Goddesses whom we adore;
And here is seen the crocus, golden-eyed;
The sleepless streams ne'er fail;
Still wandering on they glide,
And clear Kephisos waters all the vale;
Daily each night and morn
It winds through all the wide and fair champaign,

ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS

And pours its flood new-born
From the clear freshets of the fallen rain ;
The Muses scorn it not,
But here, rejoicing, their high feast-days hold,
And here, in this blest spot,
Dwells Aphrodite in her car of gold.

STROPHE II

And here hath grown long while
A marvel and a wonder such as ne'er
I heard of elsewhere,—
Nor in great Asia's land nor Dorian Isle
That Pelops owned as his ;
Full great this marvel is,—
A plant unfailing, native to the place,
Terror to every sword
Of fierce invading horde,
The grey-green Olive, rearing numerous race,
Which none or young or old
Shall smite in pride o'erbold ;
For still the orb of Zeus that all things sees
Looks on it from on high,
Zeus, the great guardian of our olive-trees,
And she, Athena, with grey gleaming eye.

ANTISTROPHE II

And yet another praise,
The chiefest boast of this our mother state,
My tongue must now relate,
The gift of that great God who ocean sways ;—
Of this our native ground
The greatest glory found,
Its goodly steeds and goodly colts I sing,
And, goodly too, its sea ;
O Son of Cronos, Thee
We own, Thou great Poseidon, Lord and King,

ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS

For thou hast made it ours
To boast these wondrous dowers,
First in our city did'st first on horses fleet
Place the subduing bit ;
And through the sea the oars well-handled flit,
Following the Nereids with their hundred feet !

1044-1095

STROPHE I

Fain would I be where meet,
In brazen-throated war,
The rush of foes who wheel in onset fleet,
Or by the Pythian shore,
Or where the waving torches gleam afar,
Where the Dread Powers watch o'er
Their mystic rites for men that mortal are,
E'en they whose golden key
Hath touched the tongue of priests, Eumolpidæ :
There, there, I deem, our Theseus leads the fight,
And those two sisters, dauntless, undismayed,
Will meet, with eager clamour of delight
That nothing leaves unsaid,
Where through these lands they tread.

ANTISTROPHE I

Or do they now, perchance,
On to the western slope
Of old Œtæis' snowy crest advance,
Hastening on swiftest steed,
Or in swift chariots each with other cope ?
Now will be spoil indeed :
Dread is their might who form our country's hope,
And dread the strength of those
Whom Theseus leads to triumph o'er their foes.
Each bit is glittering, all the squadrons speed ;
Shaking their reins, they urge their horses on,
E'en they who serve Athena on her steed,

ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS

Or Rhea's ocean Son,
Who makes the earth his throne.

STROPHE II

Act they, or linger still ?
Ah, how my soul forecasts the coming fate,
That he, against his will,
Will yield the maid whose daring has been great,
Who hath borne greatest ill
From hands of her own kin ; but, soon or late,
Zeus works to-day great things :
I prophesy of glorious victories.
Ah ! would that I on wings,
Swift as a dove on airy cloud that flies,
Might glad my longing eye
With sight of that much yearned-for victory !

ANTISTROPHE II

O Zeus ! that reign'st on high,
All-seeing, grant the rulers of our land,
In strength of victory,
With good success in ambush there to stand ;
And Thou, his child revered,
Athena Pallas ; Thou, the huntsman-God,
Apollo, loved and feared.
And she, thy sister, who the woods hath trod
Following the dappled deer
Swift-footed ; lo ! on each of you I call,—
Come, bringing succour near
To this our land, and to its people all.

1211-1248

STROPHE

One whose desire is strong
For length of days,

ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS

Who slights the middle path,
True path of praise ;
He in my eyes shall seem
Mere dreamer vain ;
For oft-times length of days
Brings nought but pain ;
And joys—thou can'st not now
Their dwelling guess,
When once a man gives way
To hope's excess ;
At last the helper comes
That comes to all,
When Hades' doom appears
And dark shades fall ;
Lyreless and songless then,
No wedding guest,
Death comes to work the end,
Death, last and best.

ANTISTROPHE

Never to be at all,
Excels all fame ;
Quickly, next best, to pass
From whence we came.
When youth hath passed away,
With follies vain,
Who then is free from cares ?
Where is not pain ?
Murders and strifes and wars,
Envy and hate ;
Then, evil worst of all,
The old man's fate :
Powerless and wayward then,
No friend to cheer,—

ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS

All ills on ills are met,
All dwelling there.

EPODE

Thus this poor sufferer lives,
Not I alone ;
As on far northern coast
Wild waters moan,
So without rest or hope,
Woes round him swarm,
Dread as the waves that rage,
Dark as the storm,—
Some from the far, far west
Where sunsets glow ;
Some where through eastern skies
Dawn's bright rays flow ;
These where the burning south
Feels the hot light,
Those where Rhipæan hills
Rise in dark night.

1447—1456

STROPHE

New sorrows throng on me,
From new source come,
New evils from this blind man's misery,
This stranger to our home ;
Unless it be that Destiny has brought
What shall at last prevail ;
For lo ! I dare not say that any thought
Of the high Gods shall fail.
Time ever sees these things, beholds them all,
Bringing full round his wheel,
Upraising in a day the things that fall :—
O Zeus ! that thunder-peal !

ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS

1463-1471

ANTISTROPHE

Lo ! the loud thunder sweeps,
Heaven-sent and dread ;
And panic terror through each white hair creeps
That crowns my aged head ;
I shudder in my soul, for yet again
The flashing lightning gleams.
What shall I say ? What issue will it gain ?
Fear fills my waking dreams ;
For not in vain do all these portents rise,
Nor void of end foreknown ;
O flashing fire that blazest through the skies !
O Zeus, the Almighty One !

1477-1485

STROPHE

Ah me ! ah me ! again
Resounds the crash that pierces in its might :
Be pitiful, be pitiful, O God !
If aught thou bringest black and dark as night,
To this our mother earth :
Yea, may I still find favour in thy sight
Nor gain boon little worth
Of seeing one on whom all curses fall !
King Zeus, on thee I call !

ANTISTROPHE

My son, come on, come on,
E'en though thou dost thy sacred station keep
There on the valley's edge,
For great Poseidon, Lord of Ocean deep,
For now the stranger-guest
His thanks on thee and on thy state would heap,
And bless thee, being blest.

ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS

Come therefore quickly ; come, O Prince and King,
And timely counsel bring.

1555-1578

STROPHE

If right it be with prayers and litanies
To worship Her who reigns,
Goddess in darkness clad,
Or Thee, O King of those
Who dwell 'neath sunless skies,
Aidoneus, O Aidoneus, I implore !
Grant that the stranger tread the darkling plains,
The dwellings of the dead and Stygian shore,
With no long agony,
No voice of wailing cry ;
For so, though many woes unmerited
Come on him, God, the Just, shall yet lift up his head.

ANTISTROPHE

Ye Goddesses who dwell in darkest gloom,
And thou, strange form and dread,
Monster untamed and wild,
Who crouchest, so they say,
By well-worn gates of doom,
And barkest from thy cavern, warder strong,
In Hades (so the rumours ever spread ;)
Grant to our friend clear space to pass along ;
(O Thou who owe'st to Earth
And Tartaros thy birth !)
There where he nears the chambers drear and dread ;
Thee I implore, who still dost sleep as sleep the dead.

ANTIGONE

100-161

STROPHE I

Ray of the golden sun,
Fairest of all
That e'er in Thebes have lit
Her seven gates tall,
Then did'st thou shine on us,
In golden gleams ;
As day's bright eye did'st come,
O'er Dirke's streams,
Driving the warrior strong,
With snow-white shield
Who had from Argos come,
Armed for the field :
Him Thou did'st put to flight,
With headlong speed,
Yea, hurl in shameful rout,
Spurring his steed.
Him Polyneikes, urged by quarrel dread,
Brought to our land a foe ;
He with shrill scream, as eagle over-head,
Hovered with wing of snow,
With many armed warriors, shield on breast,
And helmet's waving crest.

ANTISTROPHE I

And so he came and stood,
In fierce, hot hate,
With spears that slaughter craved,
Round each tall gate.

ANTIGONE

He went, his jaws unfilled
With blood of ours,
Ere pine-fed blaze had seized
Our crown of towers.
So great the battle-din
Around his rear,—
The crash, that Ares loves,
Of shield and spear :
Hard conflict that and stiff
For well-matched foe,
The dragon fierce who fought
And laid him low.

For Zeus the lofty speech of boastful pride
Hateth exceedingly ;
And sees them as they flow in torrent wide,
Proud of gold panoply,—
With fire swift-flung he hurls from rampart high
One who shouts " Victory ! "

STROPHE II

So smitten down he fell
Straight to the echoing earth,
He who, with torch of fire,
And mad with frenzied mirth,
Swooped on our hearth and home
With blasts of bitter hate.
So fared they ; Ares wroth
To each brought different fate,
And so appeared, in hour of greatest need,
Our chariot's worthiest steed.

For seven great captains at our seven gates stood,
Equals with equals matched, and left their arms
Tribute to Zeus on high,—
All but the brothers, hateful in their mood,
Who, from one father and one mother born,
Each claiming victory,

ANTIGONE

Wielded their spears in murderous, deadliest hate,
And shared one common fate.

ANTISTROPHE II

But now since Victory comes,
Mighty and glorious named,
Giving great cause of joy
To Thebes for chariots famed ;
Of these our conflicts past
Learn ye forgetfulness,
And with our night-long dance
Around each temple press ;
And Bacchos, making Thebes to ring again,
Let Him begin the strain.

But now the prince and sovereign of our land,
Creon, Menœkeus' son, with counsels new,
Following new turns of fate,
Comes, having matters of great weight in hand ;
For he has called us all to conference,
The elders of his state,
And by one common summons for us sent,
For this high parliament.

332-375

STROPHE I

Many the things that strange and wondrous are,
None stranger and more wonderful than man ;
He dares to wander far,
With stormy blast across the hoary sea,
Where nought his eye can scan
But waves still surging round unceasingly ;
And Earth, of all the Gods,
Mightiest, unwearied, indestructible,
He weareth year by year, and breaks her clods,
While the keen plough-share marks its furrows well,
Still turning to and fro ;

ANTIGONE

And still he bids his steeds
Through daily taskwork go.

ANTISTROPHE I

And lo ! with snare and net he captives makes
Of all the swift-winged tribes that flit through air ;
Wild, untamed beasts he takes ;
And many a sea-born dweller of the deep
He with devices rare
Snares in his mesh,—man, wonderful in skill ;
And all brute things that dwell
In forest dark, or roam upon the hill,
He by his craft makes subject to his need,
And brings upon the neck of rough-maned steed
The yoke that makes him bend,
And binds the mountain bull
Resisting to the end.

STROPHE II

And speech, and subtle thought,
Swift as the wind,
And temper duly wrought
To statesman's mind,—
These he hath learnt, and how to flee the power
Of cold that none may bear,
And all the tempest darts of arrowy shower
That hurtle through the air :
Armed at all points, unarmed he nought shall meet
That coming time reveals ;
Only from Hades finds he no retreat,
Though many a sore disease that hopeless seemed he
heals.

ANTISTROPHE II

And lo ! with all this skill,
Beyond hope's dream,
He now to good inclines,
And now to ill ;

ANTIGONE

Now holding fast his country's ancient laws,
And in the state's esteem
Most honoured ; but dishonoured, should he cause
The thing as evil known
To rule his heart in wantonness of pride ;
Ne'er may he dwell with me,
Nor share my counsels, prompting at my side,
Who evil deeds like this still works perpetually !

582-630

STROPHE I

Ah ! happy are the souls that know not ill ;
For they whose house is struck by wrath divine,
Find that no sorrow faileth, creeping still
Through long descent of old ancestral line ;
So is it as a wave
Of ocean's billowing surge,
(Where Thrakian storm-winds rave,
And floods of darkness from the depths emerge,)
Rolls the black sand from out the lowest deep,
And shores re-echoing wail, as rough blasts o'er them sweep.

ANTISTROPHE I

Woes upon woes fast falling on the race
Of Labdacos that faileth still I see,
Nor can one age for that which comes win grace,
But still some God hurls all to misery :
All power to heal is fled ;
For her, the one faint light,
That o'er the last root spread,
And in the house of Œdipus was bright,
Now doth the blood-stained scythe of Gods below
Cut down, man's frenzied word and dread Erinnyes' woe.

STROPHE II

What pride of man, O Zeus, in check can hold
Thy power divine,

ANTIGONE

Which nor sleep seizeth that makes all things old,
Nor the long months of God in endless line ?
 Thou grow'st not old with time,
 But ruling in thy might,
For ever dwellest in thy home sublime,
Olympos, glittering in its sheen of light :
 And through the years' long tale,
 The far time or the near,
As through the past, this law shall still prevail :—
Nought comes to life of man without or woe or fear.

ANTISTROPHE II

For unto many men come hopes that rove,
 Bringing vain joy,
And unto many cheats of blinded love ;
Subtly it creeps upon the unconscious boy,
 Until his feet wax bold
 To tempt the blazing fire.
For wisely was it said by one of old,
True speech, far-famed, for all men to admire,
 That evil seems as good
 To him whom God would slay,
Through doom of evil passion in the blood ;
And he without that doom scarce passeth e'en a day.

781-881

STROPHE I

O Erôs, irresistible in fight,
 Thou rushest on thy prey,
Or on fair maiden's blushing cheeks
 All night dost lurking stay ;
Over the sea thou roamest evermore,
Or through the huts of shepherds rough and poor :
 None of the deathless Ones can flee,
 Nor mortal men escape from thee ;
And mad is he who comes beneath thy sway.

ANTIGONE

ANTISTROPHE I

Minds of the righteous, true and faithful found,
Thou turn'st aside to ill,
And now this strife of nearest kin
Thou stirrest at thy will.
Mighty is Love in glance of beauteous bride,
Enthroned 't sits with great laws at its side ;
And One, in wondrous might,
Makes merry at the sight,
The Goddess Aphrodite, conquering still.
So even I am borne along
Beyond the bounds that law uprears,
And, seeing this, am no more strong
To stay the fountain of my tears ;
For lo ! Antigone doth tread
The path to that wide couch where slumber all the dead.

Antigone

STROPHE II

Yes, O my friends and countrymen, ye see
How I my last path tread,
And look on the last ray of brilliancy
By yonder bright sun shed,—
This once, but never more ; for Hades vast,
Drear home of all the dead,
Leads me, in life, where Acheron flows fast,
Sharing no marriage bed :
No marriage hymn was mine in all the past,
But Acheron I wed.

Chorus

And dost thou not depart,
Glorious, with highest praise,
To where the dead are gathered in the gloom,
Not smitten by the wasting plague's fell dart,
Nor slain, as sharp sword slays ?

*
ANTIGONE

But free and living still,
Thou, of thine own free will,
Descendest to the darkness of the tomb.

Antigone

ANTISTROPHE II

I heard of one, the child of Tantalos,
The Phrygian, crushed with woes,
And there, hard by the crag of Sipylos,
As creeping ivy grows,
So crept the shoots of rock o'er life and breath ;
And, as the rumour goes,
The showers ne'er leave her, wasting in her death,
Nor yet the drifting snows ;
From weeping brows they drip on rocks beneath ;
Thus God my life o'erthrows.

Chorus

And yet a Goddess she, of birth divine,
And we frail mortals, and of mortal race ;
And for weak woman it is highest grace
That fate the Gods have suffered should be thine.

Antigone

STROPHE III

Alas ! ye mock at me ;
Why thus laugh on ?
As yet I still live here,
Not wholly gone.
O fellow citizens
Of city treasure-stored !
O streams of Dirke's brook !
O grove of Thebes adored,
Where stand the chariots fair !—
I bid you witness give,
How, by my friends unwept,
I pass while yet I live,
205

ANTIGONE

To yonder heaped-up mound of new-made tomb :

Ah, miserable me !

Nor dwelling among men, nor with the dead,

Bearing this new, drear doom,

Disowned by those who live, and those whose life hath
fled.

Chorus

Thou hast gone far in boldness, yea, too far,

And now against the throne of Right on high,

My child, thou stumblest in thy waywardness ;

Thou fillest up thy father's misery.

Antigone

ANTISTROPHE III

Ah ! there thou touchest on

My bitterest care,

The thrice-told tale of woe

My sire did bear,

The fate of all who take

From Labdacos their name ;

Woes of my mother's bed !

Embrace of foulest shame,

Mother's and son's, whence I

(O misery !) was born ;

Whom now I go to meet,

Unwed, accursed, forlorn.

Ah, brother ! thou, in evil wedlock wed,

Hast, in that death of thine,

Made me, who still survived, as numbered with the dead.

Chorus

Holy it may be, holy awe to shew,

But power with him with whom due power doth rest

Admits not of defiance without sin ;

And thou from self-willed pride yet sufferest.

ANTIGONE

Antigone

Friendless, unwept, unwed,
I wend in sorrow my appointed way ;
No more may I behold this sacred ray
By yon bright glory shed,
And yet no single friend
Utters a wail for my unwept-for end.

937-987

Antigone

City of Thebes, my fathers' ancient home,
Ye Gods of days of old,
I linger not. They drag me to my doom ;
Princes of Thebes, behold ;
See ye what I, the last of kingly race,
And at whose hands I suffer sore disgrace,
Because all holy ties I still as holy hold.

Chorus

STROPHE I

So once of old the form of Danae bore
The loss of heavenly light,
In palace strong with brazen fastenings bright,
And, in her tomb-like chamber evermore,
Did long a prisoner dwell,
Yet she, my child, my child, was high in birth,
And golden shower, that flowed from Zeus to earth,
She cherished right well :
Ah, strange and dread the power of Destiny,
Which neither proud and full prosperity,
Nor Ares in his power,
Nor dark, sea-beaten ships, nor tower,
Are able to defy.

ANTIGONE

ANTISTROPHE I

So too the son of Dryas once was bound,
King of Edonian race;
Rough-tempered, he, for words of foul disgrace,
At Dionysos' hands stern sentence found,
In rocky cave confined :
And so there faileth, drop by drop, the life
Of one whose soul was racked by maddening strife ;
And then he called to mind
That he had touched the God with ribald tongue ;
For he essayed to check the Mænads' throng,
And quench the sacred fire,
And stirred to jealousy the choir
Of Muses loving song.

STROPHE II

Hard by the gloomy rocks where two seas meet
The shores of Bosporos rise,
And Salmydessos, the wild Thrakians' seat,
Where Ares saw upon the bleeding eyes
A wound accursèd, made in hellish mood
Of step-dame stern and fierce,—
Eyes that were torn by hands deep dyed in blood,
And points of spindles, quick and sharp to pierce.

ANTISTROPHE II

And they, poor wretches, wail their wretched fate,
Birth stained with foul disgrace ;
They wail their mother's lot, of lineage great,
Descended from the old Erechtheid race ;
And she in yon far distant caverns vast,
Daughter of Boreas, grew,
On lofty crag, amid the stormy blast ;
And yet on her the Fates their dread spell threw.

ANTIGONE

1115-1152

STROPHE I

O Thou of many a name,
Joy of Cadmeian bride,
Child of great Zeus loud-thundering from the sky !
Thou rulest o'er Italia great in fame,
And dwellest where the havens open wide
Of Deo, whom Eleusis throneth high.
O Bacchos, who in Thebes delightest most,
Fair mother-city of the Bacchic throng,
Or where Ismenos' stream flows full and strong,
Or by the brood that sprang from dragon's armed host.

ANTISTROPHE I

Thee the bright flame saw there,
O'er rock of double crest,
Where nymphs of Corycos in revel roam,
And bright Castalia's fountain floweth fair ,
And Thee, the banks of Nysa ivy-drest,
And the green shore, of many a vine the home,
Lead forth with joy, a welcome visitant,
In all the open spaces of the town,
While words scarce mortal come our joy to crown,
And make our Thebes resound with rapture jubilant.

STROPHE II

Yes, this of all that are,
Cities of ancient note, '
Thou honourest most by far,
Thou, and thy mother whom the thunder smote ;
And now since all the land
By sharp, sore pestilence is smitten low,
Come Thou with feet still cleansing as they go,
Or o'er Parnassian height,
Or where the waters bright
Make their perpetual moan to shores on either hand.

ANTIGONE

ANTISTROPHE II

O Thou that lead'st the choir
Of stars in yonder skies
That breathe with living fire,
The Lord and ruler of the night's loud cries ;
Child of great Zeus adored !
Appear, O King ! with all thy Thyiad train,
Who, all night long, in dance that fires the brain,
Raise shouts of ecstasy,
With fierce and frenzied cry,
Still honouring thee, Iacchos, King and Lord.

ELECTRA

86-250

Electra

O HOLY light of morn !
O air that dost the whole earth compass round
Oft have ye heard my cries of grief forlorn,
 And oft the echoing sound
 Of blows the breast that smite,
 When darkness yields to light ;
And for my nightly vigils they know well,
 Those loathèd couches of my hated home,
How I upon my father's sorrows dwell ;
 To whom in no strange land did Ares come
 Breathing out slaughter dread ;
But she, my mother, and her paramour,
 Ægisthos, smote him dead
 With axe of murderous power ;
 As men who timber hew
Cut down a lofty oak, so him they slew ;
 And from none else but me
 Comes touch of sympathy,
 Though thou wast doomed to die,
My father, with such shame and foulest ignominy.

 And, lo ! I will not fail
To weep and mourn with wailings and with sighs,
While yet I see the bright stars in the skies,
 Or watch the daylight glad,—
 No, no, I will not fail,
 Like sorrowing nightingale,

ELECTRA

Before the gate to pour my sorrows free,
My woe and sorrow at my father's doom.
O house of Hades and Persephone,
O Hermes, guide of dwellers in the gloom,
Thou, awful Curse, and ye,
Erinnyes, daughters of the Gods, most dread,
Whose eyes for ever see
Men foully slain, and those whose marriage bed
The lust of evil guile
Doth stealthily defile,
Come, come, avengers of my father's fate !
Come, send my brother back !
For I the courage lack,
Alone to bear the burden of this evil weight.

Chorus

STROPHE I

O child, Electra, child
Of mother doomed to all extremest ill,
Why thus in wailing wild
Dost thou unceasing pour thy sorrows still
For him who, long ago,
Caught in thy mother's base and godless cheat,
Fell by the fatal blow,
Our chieftain, Agamemnon ? Yea, may he
Who planned this vile deceit
(If so to speak is meet)
Perish most wretchedly !

Electra

O daughters of the brave and true of heart,
Ye come to comfort me in all my woe ;
I know your love, yea, know its every part ;
And yet I have no wish to stop the flow

ELECTRA

Of tears and wailings for my ill-starred sire ;
But, O my friends, who meet,
With true affection, all my heart's desire,
Suffer me thus, I pray,
To pine and waste away.

Chorus

ANTISTROPHE I

And yet thou can'st not raise
Thy father, nor with wailing nor with prayer,
From Hades' darkling ways,
And gloomy lake where all that die repair ;
But thou, thus grieving still,
Dost pass, brought low, from evil one might bear
To that worst form of ill,
In which for deepest woe is no relief.
Ah me ! why striv'st thou so
For such increase of woe,
Still adding to my grief ?

Electra

Ah, weak as infant he who can forget
His parents that have perished wretchedly ;
Far more she pleaseth me that mourneth yet,
And "Itys, Itys," wails unceasingly ;
The bird heart-broken, messenger of Heaven.
Ah, Niobe, most sad !
To thee, I deem, high fate divine was given,
For thou in cavern grot,
Still weeping, ceasest not.

Chorus

STROPHE II

Ah, not for thee alone
Of mortal race hath come the taste of woes.
What cause hast thou above those twain to moan,
In whom the self-same blood of kindred flows,

ELECTRA

Iphianassa and Chrysothemis ?
And one in youth obscure and sad doth live,
Yet blest, at least, in this,
That unto him Mykenæ famed shall give
Its welcome as the son of noble sire,
Beneath the care of Zeus' almighty hand,
Returning once again, Orestes, to our land.

Electra

Yes, he it is for whom I waste away,
Wailing for him, in vain, unweariedly ;
And in my sorrow know no bridal day,
But weep sad tears from eyelids never dry,
Bearing my endless weight
Of dark and dreary fate :
And he remembers not
All that I did for him, and all he knew.
What message comes, yea, what,
That is not cheated of fulfilment true ?
He yearneth still for home ;
Yet yearning will not come.

Chorus

ANTISTROPHE II

Take heart, my child, take heart ;
Still mighty in the heavens Zeus doth reign,
Who sees the whole world, rules its every part :
To Him do thou commit thy bitter pain,
Nor be thou over-vexèd, nor forget
Those whom thou hatest sorely evermore ;
Time is a kind God yet ;
For neither he who dwells on Crisa's shore,
Where feed the oxen, Agamemnon's son,
Unheeding, there lives on ;
Nor yet the God who reigns
By Acheron's waters o'er his dark and drear domains.

ELECTRA

Electra

Nay, but the larger half of life is gone,
And all hope fails, and I no more can bear ;
No parents left, I waste my days alone,
And no true husband guardeth me from fear ;
Like one of alien race,
I, in my sore disgrace,
My father's chambers tend,
In this unsightly and unseemly dress,
And still as slave attend,
And wait on tables in my sore distress,
Tables that empty stand,
No friends on either hand.

Chorus

STROPHE III

Sad was thy father's cry,
When home he came, and sad when, as he lay,
The stern, keen blow came nigh
Of brazen hatchet sharp to smite and slay ;
Guile was it that devised the murderous crime,
And lust that slew him there,
Strangely strange form begetting of old time ;
Whether a God it were,
Or one of mortal race,
Who wrought these deeds of darkness and disgrace.

Electra

O day of all the days that ever came,
Most hateful unto me !
O night ! O woes of banquets none may name,
Which he, my sire, did see !
Foul death which their hands wrought,
The two that took by basest treachery
Him who my life's joy brought,
And so destroyed, destroyed me utterly.

ELECTRA

May He who dwells in might,
On yon Olympian height,
Give them to grieve with guilt-avenging groan,
And ne'er may they whose souls such deeds have known
Share in good fortune bright !

Chorus

ANTISTROPHE III

Take heed, and speak no more ;
Hast thou no thought from what high, prosperous state
Thou now art passing o'er,
Into what sorrow lorn and desolate ?
For thou hast gained a burden infinite
Of woe and wretchedness,
Still cherishing thy wrath in sore despite,
Fierce war and bitterness,
And yet it were ill done
To come in conflict with a mighty one

Electra

By sufferings dire, most dire, I was constrained .
I know it, wrath blinds not ;
And yet I will not hide, though direly pained,
The misery of my lot,
Not while in life I dwell.
Ah me ! from whom, my friends, companions dear,
From whom that thinketh well,
Shall I a word in season hope to hear ?
O ye, who fain would cheer,
Leave me, oh, leave me here,
For these my woes as endless shall be known ;
Nor will I cease to make my wailing moan,
And weep full many a tear.

Chorus

And yet of mere good will,
As mother fond and true,

ELECTRA

I bid thee this vain toil no more pursue,
Still breeding ill on ill.

Electra

Nay ; but what bounds are set to baseness here ?
Come, tell me this, I pray,
How can it e'er be right
Those who are dead to slight ?
Where did that law appear ?
May I ne'er walk in honour in their way,
Nor if aught good be mine,
Dwell with it happily,
Should I the wings confine
That rise with bitter cry,
And bid them cease to pay
Due reverence to my father past away !
If he who dies be but as dust and nought,
And poor and helpless lie,
And these no vengeance meet for what they wrought,
Then truly awe will die,
And all men lose their natural piety.

472-515

Chorus

STROPHE

Unless I be a brainstruck, erring seer,
Wanting in wisdom true,
Right doth her course pursue,
With dim foreshadowing :
She in her hands doth righteous victory bring,
And will ere long appear.
Yes, courage comes to me,
Hearing but now the tidings that they bring,
These visions breathing forth sweet hope and glee,
For never shall thy father, Lord and King

ELECTRA

Of all the Hellenes' race,
Forget the dire disgrace,
Nor that sharp brazen axe of yon far time,
Which slew him with all shame of foulest crime.

ANTISTROPHE

And so with many a foot and many a hand,
Lurking in ambush dread,
Shall come with brazen tread,
Erinnys terrible ;
For lo ! the clasp of blood-stained marriage-bed
Came in foul wedlock's band
On those who might not wed ;
And now, in face of these things, I must deem
That those who did or shared the deed of guilt
Shall have good reason to dislike their dream :
Yea, oracles are vain,
In dreams or prophet's strain,
Unless this shadowy phantom of the night
Shall reach its goal, victorious in the right.

EPODE

O chariot-race of old,
Full of great woe untold,
From Pelops' hand ;
How did'st thou come, yon time,
Dark with the guilt of crime,
To this our land !
For since the ocean wave
Gave Myrtilos a grave,
Out of the golden car
Hurled headlong forth afar,
With shame and foul despite,
No shame hath failed to light
On this our dwelling-place,
Bringing most foul disgrace.

ELECTRA

1058-1096

STROPHE I

Why, when we see on high
The birds whose wisdom is of noblest worth,
Still caring to supply
The wants of those from whom they had their birth,
Who fed their nestling youth,
Why do not we like boon with like requite?
Nay, by the lightning bright
Of Zeus, and heavenly strength of Law and Truth,
Not long shall we live on unpunished.
O Fame! for us poor mortals wont to bear
Thy tidings to the region of the dead,
Lift up thy wailing drear,
And to the Atreidæ, as they sleep below,
Report the shame, the discord, and the woe.

ANTISTROPHE I

Tell them those ills of old, yea, tell again,
And add that now the hot and bitter strife
Of these their children twain
Yields to no charm of fellowship in life.
Electra, now forlorn,
Deserted sails upon a stormy sea,
And in her misery,
Her father's fortune ceaseth not to mourn,
Like nightingale that wailleth evermore;
She little recks if death be in the way,
And stands prepared to sleep and wake no more,
If only she those two Erinnyes slay:
Who of all souls that are, with her can vie
For fair repute of filial loyalty?

STROPHE II

No, none of all that boast a noble fame
Would wish his fair repute to stain and spot,

ELECTRA

By living basely, stript of honoured name ;
And thou, my child, did'st choose thy dreary lot,
Thine evil lot, bewept with many a tear,
* Arming against the thing that right defies ;
And these two glories in one word dost bear
Known as true daughter, excellent and wise.

ANTISTROPHE II

Ah, may'st thou live and be as much above
Thy foes in might and wealth as now below
Thou dwellest ruled by those thou can'st not love !
For I have seen thee on thy sad path go—
No pleasant pathway that—but gaining still
The meed of praise for all the holiest laws,
Which highest place in heavenly order fill,
By this thy reverence winning God's applause.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

94-140

STROPHE I

O Thou, to whom the star-bespangled Night,
 Slain and despoiled, gives birth,
And lulls again to rest, O Sun-God bright,
 Thee, Helios, I implore,
 Tell me on what far shore
Alcmena's son is dwelling on the earth,
 (O Thou, whose glory gleaming
 In blaze of light is streaming !)
Or by the ocean-valley's deep descent,
Or taking rest in either continent,
 Tell Thou, with whom there dwells
A power to see which all our sight excels.

ANTISTROPHE I

For, lo ! I hear that she with anxious thought,
 Our Deianeira, sighs,
The bride of old in fierce, hot conflict sought ;
 And like some lonely bird,
 Whose wailing cry is heard,
Can never close in slumber tearless eyes,
 But still is forced to cherish
 Dread fear lest he should perish ;
And so in marriage couch, of spouse bereft,
Wears out her life, to lonely darkness left,
 And ever fears a fate
Full fraught with evil, dreary, desolate.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHES

STROPHE II

For even as one sees
Or South or North wind sweep resistless on,
And toss the vexèd seas,
The wild waves rushing, surging one by one,
So him of Cadmos born,
By many a great grief worn,
A Cretan sea of troubles vexeth still ;
And yet some great God's might
Keeps him from Death's dark night,
And ever guards from each extremest ill.

ANTISTROPHE II

I, therefore, blaming this,
Will come with words, though pleasant, thwarting thee :
I say thou dost amiss
To let thy better hope all wasted be.
The King who all doth hold,
Great son of Cronos old,
Hath given to no man fortune free from woe ;
But still the wheeling sphere,
Where turns the northern Bear,
Brings joy and sorrow circling as they go.

EPODE

It stayeth not on earth,
Nor star-bespangled Night, nor gloomy Fate,
Nor riches, nor high birth ;
But still it comes and goes,
Lighting on these or those,
Or joy abounding, or the low estate.
And this I say that thou,
My queen, should'st bear in mind :
For who hath seen in all the past till now
Zeus to his children known as careless or unkind ?

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

205-224

Let the loud shout arise,
With clear, re-echoing cries,
From maidens bright and fair with youth's fresh
glow;
And let the cry of men,
Again and yet again,
Hail great Apollo, bearer of the bow:
Pæans on pæans raise,
Ye maidens, in his praise,
And on his sister call, Ortygian Artemis,
The huntress of the deer,
With torches flashing clear,
And all the Nymphs whose dwelling near us is.
I quiver through each vein,
And dare not slight thy strain,
O flute, thou sovereign master of my soul;
Lo! the twined ivy-wreath
Stirs me with passionate breath,
And bids me leap in Bacchic strife beneath its strong
control.

498-532

STROPHE

Great is the power the Kyprian Goddess wields:
I speak not of the things
That touch on Heaven's high kings,
I will not tell how e'en the son of Cronos yields
To wiles that mock and cheat;
Nor how the dark retreat
Of Hades she invades and captive makes
Poseidaôn, whose touch the great earth shakes.
But who were they who came,
As combatants of fame,

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

To woo the hand of that fair virgin bride ?
Who strove with many a blow
And wrestlings, bending low,
And cloud of dust all round that did the conflict hide ?

ANTISTROPHE

One was a mighty river, dread to see,
A bull with four limbs long,
And lofty horns and strong,
The Acheloös stream from far Cœniadæ ;
And one from Thebes did go,
Shaking his well-strung bow,
With spear and club, the son of Zeus most high.
And they in hot and deadly rivalry,
Seeking for marriage-bed,
Came to the combat dread ;
And she, the Kyprian Goddess, fair to see,
There, in the midst, alone
Stood by, the Mighty One,
Wielding the umpire's rod in her supremacy.

EPODE

Clash of hands was there,
And din of clanging bow,
And horns that smote the air,
And wrestlings, limbs with limbs, and many a sturdy blow,
And many a cry of pain on either side ;
And she, the fair-faced, tender, delicate,
Upon the bank that gave good prospect sate,
Waiting for one to claim her as his bride.
(So, as her mother told,
I tell that tale of old ;)
And there the sad, pale face of sorrowing maid,
Thus wooed and won with strife,
Awaits her lot as wife,
Like lonely heifer wandering far in wildest glade.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

633-662

STROPHE I

O ye whose dwelling lies
By the warm springs that to the harbour flow,
Or where the tall rocks rise
And cliffs of Cæta ; ye who wont to go
Hard by the Melian lake,
And coasts where roams the golden-arrowed queen,
Where Hellenes counsel take,
And there at Pylæ famed their agora convene,

ANTISTROPHE I

Quickly to you the flute
Shall raise in music sweet no tuneless strain,
But one that well may suit
The answering lyre from out the Muses' train :
For now Alcmena's son,
Who Zeus his father calls, returneth home ;
With spoils that he hath won,
High prize of valour, now will he exulting come :

STROPHE II

E'en he of whom we thought
Twelve long months, knowing nought,
As of an exile far upon the sea ;
While, weeping for her lord,
Her tears the poor wife poured,
And her sad heart grew faint with misery ;
But now to fury wrought,
Great Ares hath the end of all her dark days brought.

ANTISTROPHE II

Oh, may he come, yes, come !
Ne'er, till he reach his home,

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

May his swift ship know hazards nor delays !
 Leaving the sea-washed shrine,
 Where he, in rite divine,
Is said to offer sacrifice and praise,
 So may he come, all calm,
Soothed at the Kentaur's hest by that anointing balm !

821-861

STROPHE I

See, O ye maidens, how the sacred word
Of that far-seeing Providence of Heaven
 Hath sped, through which we heard
That, when the twelfth full harvest-tide should come,
Its months completed, there should then be given
To the true son of Zeus full rest at home
 From many a toil and woe ;
 And rightly all things go ;
For how can one who seeth not the day
In bondage still to evils wear his life away ?

ANTISTROPHE I

For if with murderous cloud from Kentaur fierce
A subtle fate wrap all his stalwart frame,
 And the hot venom pierce,
Which Death begat and spotted dragon reared,
How can he hope to see the sun's bright flame,
Beyond to-day, by form fell, dark, and feared,
 Of Hydra done to death,
 While words of crafty breath
And deadly throbs of pain that seize and burn,
Caused by the swarth-maned monster, all his might o'er-
 turn ?

STROPHE II

And she, (ah misery !)
Seeing a great evil to her home draw nigh

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Of marriage strange and new,
Hath failed to scan aright the things she knew,
And now has cause to mourn
The alien counsel of fell converse born ;
She pours, I trow, in fears,
A pelting rain of fast down-dropping tears ;
And coming Destiny
Unfolds a subtle, great calamity.

ANTISTROPHE II

The flood of tears flows fast ;
Sore evil spreads, like which in all the past
Ne'er from most hostile foe
Came on the son of Zeus far-famed, a woe
That well might move to tears.
O thou dark point of war's victorious spears,
Thou broughtest then yon bride,
Won where Œchalia soareth in its pride ;
And she of Kypros still.
In speechless might, is seen to work out Heaven's high
will.

947-1043

STROPHE I

Which calleth first for lament ?
What grief takes widest extent ?
Hard question this to decide for me in my measureless
woe !

ANTISTROPHE I

Some sorrows dwell with us near,
And some we await in our fear,
And the present and future alike in one common dreari-
ness flow.

STROPHE II

Ah ! would that some gale, blowing soft,
Would come on my hearth and my home,

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

And bear me away, far aloft,
Where never the terror might come,—
Terror that makes the life fail—
Of seeing the strong son of Zeus—
Yes, seeing him (so runs the tale)
In pain that none may unloose,
Come to his home, smitten low,
A marvel and portent of woe.

ANTISTROPHE II

Nearer—no longer from far,
I wail him as nightingale wails ;
The tread of strange footsteps I hear. . . .
But how is he brought ? As one fails,
Wrapt in his care for a friend,
To break the hush with his tread ;
So, voiceless, on him they attend :
Ah, shall I deem him as dead ?
Or may I hope that he lies,
Deep sleep closing his eyes ?

Hyllos

Ah, woe is me for thee, my father dear !
Woe, woe, for all my misery and fear !
What sorrow cometh next ?
What counsel can I find for soul perplexed ?

Elder

Hush, boy, hush ! lest thou stir
Thy sore vexed father's anguish dark and drear ;
He lives, in sleep laid low ;
Curb thou thy lips, no murmur let him hear.

Hyllos

What say'st thou ? Lives he still ?

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Elder

Thou wilt not rouse him now he slumbers sound
My child, nor stir his ill,
Nor bid it run its fierce, relentless round.

Hyllos

And yet my mind is vexed,
Brooding o'er sorrow, shaken and perplexed.

Heracles

O Zeus !

What spot on earth is this ?
Among what men am I ?
By pain that will not cease,
Worn out with agony ;
Ah, miserable me !

Again the accursèd venom gnaws through me.

Elder [to Hyllos]

Did'st thou not know what gain
It were to silence keep,
Nor banish from the eyes of one in pain
The dew of kindly sleep ?

Hyllos

And yet I know not how
To hold my peace, such pain beholding now.

Heracles

O ye Kenæan heights
Whereon mine altars stood,
What meed for holiest rites
Have ye wrought, and for good
Such outrage brought on me !
Would God I ne'er had cast on you mine eye,

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Nor lived to see
This crown of frenzied, unsoothed agony.
What minstrel apt to charm,
What leech with skilful arm,
Apart from Zeus, this pain could tranquil keep ?
(Wonder far off were that to gaze upon !)
Ah me ! but leave me, leave me yet to sleep,
Leave me to sleep, me, miserable one.
Where dost thou touch me ? Say,
Where lay to rest ?
Ah ! thou wilt slay me, slay :
What slumbered thou hast roused to life again ;
It seizes me, it creeps, this weary pain.
Where are ye, who, of all
That Hellas hers doth call,
Are found most evil, reckless of the right ?
For whom I wore my life,
In ceaseless, dreary strife,
Slaying by land and sea dread forms of might ;
Yet now to him who lies
In these sharp agonies,
Not one will bring the fire
Or sword, wherewith to work his heart's desire ;
And none will come and smite
His head to death's dark night,
And end his misery :
Ah me ! fie on you, fie.

Elder

Come, boy, thou son of him who lieth there,
Come thou and help, the work o'ertasketh me ;
Thine eye is young and clear ;
Thy vision more than mine to save and free.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

Hyllas

I lend my hand to lift ;
But neither from within, nor yet without,
May I a life forgetting pain work out ;
Zeus only gives that gift.

Heracles

Boy, boy ! where, where art thou ?
Come, lift me up ; yea, this way raise thou me.
Oh me ! O cursed Fates !
It leaps again, it leaps upon me now,
That scourge that desolates,
Fierce, stern, inexorable agony.
O Pallas, Pallas ! Now it bites again,
That bitter throb of pain :
Come, boy, in mercy smite
The father that begat thee ; draw thy sword,
Sword none will dare to blame :
Heal thou the evil plight
With which thy mother, sold to guilt abhorred,
Hath kindled all my wrath with this foul shame.
Ah, might I see her fallen even so,
As she hath brought me low !
O Hades, dear and sweet,
Brother of Zeus on high,
Smite me with quickest death-blow, I entreat,
And give me rest, give rest from this my misery !

AIAS

133-262

O Son of Telamon,
Who hast thine home in sea-girt Salamis,
Where the waves splash and moan,
I joy when all with thee goes well and right;
But when the stroke of Zeus thy head doth smite,
Or from the Danai evil rumour flies,
Spread far by enemies,
Then am I filled with dread, and, like a dove,
In fear and trembling move,
And glance with shuddering eyes.
And now this very night, its end just come,
Great sorrows on us press,
Hearing ill news, that thou
Hast rushed upon the meadow where they roam,
Our good steeds numberless,
And there hast slain the Danai's treasured spoil,
All that was left us, won by war's sharp toil,
And dost destroy them now
With the keen, bright-edged sword.

Yea, such the gist of every whispered word
Odysseus now to each man's hearing brings,
And gains belief too well;
For lo! he tells of things
That now are found of thee too credible,
And every one that hears
Rejoiceth more than he who tells the tale,
And has but taunts and jeers
For all the sorrows that o'er thee prevail;

AIAS

For if one takes his aim
Against the great,
He shall not fail, attacking their fair fame;
But one who should relate
Such tales of me would little credence gain;
For envy still attends on high estate:
And yet the poor but little may sustain,
Weak tower and bulwark they,
Who have not great and mighty men their stay;
And still the great must own
The poor and weak the best props of their throne.
Yet men are slow to see,
Senseless and blind, the truth of laws like these.
And now, O king, on thee
Such men pour idle clamour, as they please,
And we are weak and frail,
And without thee to ward them off we fail;
But when thy form shall fill their souls with fear,
As flocks of winged birds in fluttering haste,
When swoops a vulture near,
Raise din and chattering loud,
So, should'st thou once appear,
They too would crouch in dread, a dumb and voiceless
crowd.

STROPHE

Yes, of a truth, the huntress Artemis,
Daughter of Zeus, the wild bull bringing low,
(O dark and evil fame!
O mother of my shame!)

She, she hath urged and driven thee on to this,
Against the people's herds with sword to go.
Was it for conquest whence she did not bear
In war's success her share?

Or was she tricked of gifts of glorious spoils,
Or wild deer quarry, taken in the toils?

AIAS

Or was it Enyalios, brazen-clad,
 Brooding o'er fancied slight
For help in war whence he no booty had,
Who thus avenged his wrong in stratagems of night ?

ANTISTROPHE

For never else, O son of Telamon,
Had'st thou, from peace and healthy calmness driven,
 (Turning so far astray
 As these poor brutes to slay,)
To dark, sinister ill so madly gone !
It may be that this evil comes from Heaven ;
But Zeus and Phœbos, may they still avert
 The Argives' words of hurt !
But if the mighty kings, with evil will,
Spread tidings false, or, sunk in deepest ill,
That off-shoot of the stock of Sisyphos,
 Do not, O king, I pray,
Still by the waves in tents abiding thus,
Take to thy shame and mine the evil that they say.

EPODE

Rise from thy seat, arise,
Where all too long thou hast unmoved stayed on,
Kindling a woe that spreadeth to the skies,
While thy foes' haughty scorn its course doth run,
 With nothing to restrain,
As in a thicket when the wind blows fair ;
 And all take up the strain,
And tell of things that drive me to despair :
 For me is nought but pain.

Tecmessa

O men, who came to aid
Our Aias, ye who trace your ancient birth
To old Erechtheus, sprung from out the earth,
 We who watch, half afraid,

A I A S

Far from his home, o'er Telamon's dear son,
Have cause enough to wail ;
Aias, the dread, strong, mighty to prevail,
Lies smitten low
By stormy blast of wild tempestuous woe.

Chorus

What trouble burdensome,
In place of peace and rest,
Hath the night to us brought ?
O thou from Phrygia come,
Child of Teleutas old,
Speak thou at our behest,
For Aias holds thee high in his esteem,
Prize of his prowess bold ;
And thou would'st speak not ignorant, I deem.

Tecmessa

Yet how can I speak aught
Of what with woe unspeakable is fraught ?
Dreadful and dark the things that thou wilt hear ;
For Aias in the night
Hath fallen in evil plight :
Yes he, the great, far-famed, sits raving there.
Such the dread sight would meet thy shrinking eyes
Within his tent,
His victims slaughtered, mangled, blood-besprent,
The hero's sacrifice.

Chorus

STROPHE

Ah me ! what news of fear
Of him, the man of spirit bright and keen,
Thou bringest to our ear,
Tidings we may not bear,
While yet no way of 'scaping them is seen,

AIAS

By the great Danai spread,
Which mighty Rumour swells to form more dread.
Ah me ! I fear, I fear,
What creepeth near and near ;
In sight of all men draws he nigh to death ;
For he with hand to frenzy turned aside,
And dark sword's edge hath slain,
The herds that roamed the plain
And keepers who were there the steeds to guide.

Tecmessa

Ah me ! 'Twas thence he rushed,
Dragging the flock of sheep as bound with chain ;
And some he stabbed until the blood outgushed,
And some with one sharp stroke he clove in twain ;
And, seizing two swift rams with white-woolled feet,
Of one he took the head and tore the tongue,
And both away he flung ;
The other to a column bound upright,
Taking his chariot's rein,
And with his double scourge that rings again,
Still more and more did smite,
Uttering foul words of shame,
Which never from a man, but from a demon came.

Chorus

ANTISTROPHE

Now it is time to hide
One's head beneath the shelter of the veil,
Or in the ships that glide,
Swiftly o'er ocean's tide,
On bench of rowers sitting swift to sail :
Such are the threats they fling,
The two Atreidæ, each a sovereign king,
Against me, and I dread
Lest I should lie there dead,*
By fearful fate of stoning doomed to die,

AIAS

Sharing the woe of him our lord and friend,
Whom shame and dark disgrace,
That none may dare to face,
As prisoner keep, and hold him to the end.

Tecmessa

Nay, it is so no more ;
For as the swift South-west,
That rushes on without the lightning-blaze,
Soon lulls its tempest roar,
So he is calm ; and now his care-worn breast
Broods o'er new trouble, filled with sore amaze ;
For to look out on ills ourselves have wrought,
Which no hand else has brought,
This of all grief and pain
Is hardest to sustain.

348-427

Aias

STROPHE I

O sailors dear to me, my true friends still,
Ye only faithful found,
Ye see how o'er me waves of deadly ill
Go surging round and round.

Chorus

Ah me ! Too well thou speakest all the truth.
[*Aside.*] Yet his acts show how frenzied is his soul.

Aias

ANTISTROPHE I

O race of men who with my good ship sailed,
Who came and plied the oar,
Yet only have in trouble never failed ;
Now slay me, I implore.

AIAS

Chorus

Hush, hush ! nor seek fresh ill on ill to pour,
Nor make the weight of sorrow more and more.

Aias

STROPHE II

Thou see'st the brave and bold,
(Fearless in fight was he,)
His prowess show on brute beasts of the field :
Ah me ! What scorn and outrage fall on me !

Tecmessa

Dear lord ! I pray thee, Aias, speak not thus.

Aias

Away ! Wilt thou not go ?
Away with thee ! . . . Woe, woe !

Tecmessa

Nay, by the Gods, be calm and yield to us.

Aias

O wretched fool, whose hands have failed to keep
My foe's accursed brood,
And falling on horn'd kine and goodly sheep,
Poured out their purple blood !

Chorus

Why wilt thou grieve at what is past and done ?
These things can never be but as they are.

Aias

O thou, who spy'st out all,
Thou son of Lartios, tool for all things vile,
Of all the host to shame the meanest thrall,
For joy of heart, I trow, thou now wilt smile.

AIAS

Chorus

It is through God we all or smile or wail.

Aias

Ah ! might I see him near,
Sore vexèd though I be with grief and fear. . . .

Chorus

Hush thy rash speech. What ! See'st not where thou
art ?

Aias

O Zeus, my father's God ! Ah would that I,
Might on that scoundrel foe
And those two kings my vengeance work, and die
Myself by that same blow !

Tecmessa

When this thou prayest, pray for my death too.
Why should I care for life when thou art dead ?

Aias

STROPHE III

O dark that art my light !
O gloom that art to me supremely bright !
Oh, take me, I entreat,
Take me to dwell with you ; I am not meet
To look to Heaven's high race
For any helping grace,
Nor yet to men whose brief days swiftly fleet.
But She, the mighty One,
Daughter of Zeus on high,
With shameful contumely,
My life to death hath done.

AIAS

Where, where is room for flight ?
Or whither roam and stay ?
If evil day still follows evil night,
And we are hunting for a madman's prey,
Then should the whole host, hurling thrice strong spear,
Smite me and slay me here.

Tecmessa

Ah misery ! That one so brave and good
Should say the things he never dared before !

Aias

ANTISTROPHE III

O ye paths of the waves !
Grove on the shore, and sea-encompassed caves !
Long time ye held me bound,
Imprisoned long, too long, on Troïa's ground,
But now no longer — no,
As long as life shall flow ;
This let him know with whom is wisdom found ;
And ye, O streams, that glide,
Scamandros, murmuring near,
Friend to the Argives dear,
No longer at your side
Shall ye this hero see,
Of whom I dare proclaim,
Though great the boast, that of all Hellenes he
To Troïa came of mightiest name and fame ;
But now, disgraced and whelmed with infamy,
All helpless here I lie.

596-645

STROPHE I

O glorious Salamis !
Thou dwellest where the salt waves hurl their sprays,
Crowned with all brightest bliss,
And all men own thee worthy of great praise ;

A I A S

And I (ah, wretched me !
The time is long since I abandoned thee)
In Ida staying still,
Or when the frost was chill,
Or when the grass was green upon the hill,
Through all the long, long months innumerable,
Here, worn with sorrow, dwell.

ANTISTROPHE I

And Aias with us still,
Stays as fresh foe, and difficult to heal,
Dwelling with frenzied ill ;
Whom thou of old did'st send with sword of steel,
Mighty in strife of war ;
And now, in dreary loneliness of soul,
To all his friends around
Great sorrow is he found ;
And deeds that did in noblest good abound,
With Atreus' sons, as deeds of foe to foe,
Are fallen, fallen low.

STROPHE II

Now of a truth outworn
With length of years,
In hoary age his mother loud shall mourn,
When she with bitter tears
Of that his frenzied mood shall hear the tale,
And weep, ah, well-a-day !
Nor will she utter wail
Like mourning nightingale,
That sadly sings in tone of mood distressed ;
But echoing hands shall smite upon her breast,
And she, her grey hair tearing, shall lament alway.

ANTISTROPHE II

Far better did he lie
In Hades drear,

AIAS

Who is sore vexed, sore vexed with vanity,
Who doth no more appear
(Though boasting high descent in long array)
Steadfast in temper true,
But wanders far astray ;
Ah, father, dark the day !
So sad a tale awaits thee now to hear,
Thy child's sore trouble, woe that none may bear,
Which until now the sons of Æacos ne'er knew. ❧

693-717

STROPHE

I thrill with eager delight,
And with passionate joy I leap ;
Io Pan ! Io Pan ! Io Pan !
Come over the waves from the height
Of the cliffs of Kyllene, where sweep
The storm-blasts of snow in their might !
Come, come, O King, at the head
Of the dance of the Gods as they tread,
That thou, with me, may'st twine
The self-taught Nysian line,
Or Knossian dance divine !
Right well I now may dance :
And o'er Icarian wave,
Coming with will to save,
May Delos' King, Apollo, gloriously advance !

ANTISTROPHE

Yes, the dark sorrow and pain,
Far from me Ares hath set ;
Io Pan ! Io Pan ! once more ;
And now, O Zeus, yet again
May our swift-sailing vessels be met
By the dawn with clear light in its train .

AIAS

Our Aias from woe is released,
And the wrath of the Gods hath appeased,
And now, with holiest care,
He offers reverent prayer.
Ah, great Time nought will spare :
Nought can I count as strange,
Since, out of hopeless pain,
Aias is calm again,
Nor lets his fierce hot wrath against the Atreidæ range.

1185-1222

STROPHE I

When will they cease, the years,
The long, long tale of years that come and go,
Bringing their ceaseless fears,
The toils of war that scatter woe on woe,
Through Troia's champaign wide,
Reproach and shame to all the Hellenes' pride ?

ANTISTROPHE I

Would that he first had trod
The wide, vast Heaven, or Hades, home of all,
Who erst the Hellenes showed
The hateful strife where men in conflict fall !
Ah, woes that woes begat !
For he, yes he, hath made men desolate.

STROPHE II

Yes he, e'en he, hath made it mine
To know nor joy of flowery wreaths,
Nor deep cups flowing o'er with wine,
Nor the sweet strain the soft flute breathes ;
Nor yet (ah, woe ! ah, cursed spite !)
The joy that crowns the livelong night.

Yes, he from love and all its joy
Has cut me off, ah me ! ah me !

AIAS

And here I linger still in Troy,
By all uncared for, sad to see,
My hair still wet with dew and rain ;
Sad keepsake they from Troia's plain !

ANTISTROPHE II

Till now from every fear by night,
And bulwark against darts of foe,
Aias stood forward in his might,
But now the stern God lays him low :
Ah me ! ah me ! What share have I,
Yea what, in mirth and revelry ?

Ah ! would that I my flight could take
Where o'er the sea the dark crags frown,
And on the rocks the wild waves break,
And woods the height of Sunion crown,
That so we might with welcome bless
Great Athens in her holiness !

PHILOCTETES

135-218

Chorus

STROPHE I

WHAT must I say or hide, O master dear,
In a strange land, myself a stranger here,
 To one who looks askance
 With shy, suspecting glance?
 Ever his skill excels
The counsel and the skill of other men,
 With whom the sceptre dwells
That Zeus bestows from heaven on those that reign.
 And now on thee, O boy,
Comes all this might of venerable days;
 Tell me then what employ
Thou bid'st me serve in, tending all thy ways.

Neoptolemos

Perchance thou fain would'st know
Where he in that remotest corner lies:
Take courage then, and hither turn thine eyes:
But when he comes, that traveller, with his bow
 Waking our fear
Then, from this cavern drawing back,
 As helper still be near,
And strive to serve me so that nothing lack.

Chorus

ANTISTROPHE I

Long since I cared for what thou bid'st me care,
To work out all that on thy need may bear;

PHILOCTETES

And now I pray thee tell
Where he may chance to dwell—
What region is his home?
Not out of season is it this to hear,
Lest he should subtly come,
And unawares fall on me here or there.
Say where does he abide,
What pathway does he travel to and fro?
Do his steps homeward glide,
Or does he tread the paths that outward go?

Neoptolemos

Thou see'st this cavern open at each end,
With chambers in the rock.

Chorus

And where is he, that sufferer, absent now?

Neoptolemos

'To me it is full clear
That he in search for food his slow way wends,
Not far off now, but near;
For so, the rumour runs, his life he spends,
With swift-winged arrows smiting down his prey,
Wretched and wretchedly;
And none to him draws nigh,
With power to heal, and charm his grief away.

Chorus

STROPHE II

I pity him in truth,
How he with none to care of all that live,
With no face near that he has known in youth,
Still dwells alone where none may succour give,
Plagued with a plague full sore:
And as each chance comes on him, evermore
Wanders forth wretchedly,

PHILOCTETES

Ah me, how is 't he still endures to live

In this his misery ?

O struggles that the Gods to mortals give !

O miserable race,

Of those whose lives have failed to find the middle place !

ANTIISTROPHE II

He, born of ancient sires,

And falling short of none that went before,

Now lies bereaved of all that life requires,

In lonely grief, none near him evermore,

Dwelling with dappled deer,

Or rough and grisly beasts, and called to bear

Both pain and hunger still ;

Bearing sore weight of overwhelming ill,

Evil that none may heal,

And bitter wailing cry that doth its woe reveal.

Neoptolemos

Nought of all this is marvellous to me,

For, if my soul has any power to see,

These sufferings from the ruthless Chryse sent

Come with divine intent ;

And all that now he bears

With no friend's loving cares,

It needs must be that still

It worketh a God's will,

That he the darts of Gods invincible

Should yet refrain from hurling against Troy

Till the full time is come,

When, as by fated doom,

(For thus it is they tell,)

It shall be his that city to destroy.

Chor. Hush, hush, boy.

Neop.

What means this ?

PHILOCTETES

Chor. The heavy tread I hear,
As of a man who doth his sad life wear,
Somewhere, or here or there,
It falls, I say, it falls
Upon the listening sense,
That moan of one who, worn with anguish, crawls :
Those gasps of pain intense,
Heard from afar, to hide his anguish fail,
The groans he utters tell their own sad tale.
But now, boy . . .

Neop. What comes next ?

Chor. New counsels form and try ;
For now the man is not far off but nigh,
With no soft whispered sigh,
As shepherd with his reed,
Who through the meadow strays ;
But he or falling in sore stress of need,
Sharp cry of pain doth raise ;
Or he has seen our ship in harbour sail,
Strange sight ! and comes in fear our presence here to wail.

676-728

STROPHE I

I heard the story old,
Though never was it given me to behold,
How Cronos' mighty son
Bound on the wheel that still went whirling on,
The man who dared draw nigh
The holy marriage-bed of Zeus on high ;
But never heard I tell,
Or with mine eyes saw fate more dark and fell
Than that which this man bound,
Though he nor guilty of foul deeds was found,
Nor yet of broken trust,
But still was known as just among the just ;

PHILOCTETES

And now he perisheth
With this unlooked-for, undeserved death :
And wonder fills my soul,
How he, still listening to the surge's roll,
Had strength his life to bear,
Life where no moment came but brought a tear.

ANTISTROPHE I

Here where none near him came,
Himself his only neighbour, weak and lame,
None, in the island born,
Sharing his woe, to whom his soul might mourn,
With loud re-echoing cry,
The gnawing pains, the blood-fraught misery,—
* Who might with herbs assuage
The gore that oozes, in its fevered rage,
From out his foot's sore wound,
(Should that ill seize him,) from the parent ground
Still gathering what was meet ;
And now this way, now that he dragged his feet,
Trailing his weary way,
(Like children, who, their nurse being absent, stray,)
Where any ease might be,
Whene'er his pain sore-vexing left him free.

STROPHE II

No food had he from out the sacred ground,
Nor aught of all we share,
Keen workers as we are,
Only what he with winged arrows found,
From his swift-darting bow.
O soul, worn down with woe !
That for ten years ne'er knew the wine-cup's taste,
But turning still his gaze
Where the pool stagnant stays,
Thither he aye his dreary pathway traced.

PHILOCTETES

ANTISTROPHE II

But now since he hath met with true-born son
Of men of valour, he
Shall rise up blest and free :
One who, in ship that o'er the sea had flown,
After long months hath come,
And leads him to his home,
Where nymphs of Melia dwell, and, bearing shield,
The hero oft hath trod,
Equal with Gods, a God,
Bright with Heaven's fire o'er Cæta's lofty field.

827-864

Chorus

O sleep, that know'st not pain !
O sleep, that know'st not care !
Would thou might'st come with blessed, balmy air,
And blessing long remain,
And from his eyes ward off the noon-tide blaze,
Now full upon him poured ;
Come as our Healer, Lord !
And thou, my son, look well to all thy ways ;
What next demands our thought ?
What now must needs be wrought ?
Thou see'st him ; and I ask
Why we delay our task ;
Occasion that still holds to counsel right,
With quickest speed appears as conqueror in the fight.

Neoptolemos

True, he indeed heareth nought, but yet I see that all vainly
We hunt after this man's bow, in good ship sailing
without him.
There is the crown of success, him the God bade us
bring with us ;
Sore shame were it now with lies to boast of a task still
unfinished.

PHILOCTETES

Chorus

ANTISTROPHE

This, boy, will God provide,
But when thou speak'st again,
Speak, boy, O speak in low and whispered strain;
Of those so sorely tried
Sleep is but sleepless, quick to glance and see;
But look with all thy skill,
What way to work thy will,
And gain that prize, yea that, all secretly.
Thou knowest whose we are,
And if his thoughts thou share,
Then may the men who see with clearest eyes,
Look out ahead for sore perplexities.

EPODE

Yes, boy, 'tis come, the hour;
Sightless the man lies there,
Stretched as in midnight's power,
No friend or helper near,
(Yea, sleep is sound and sweet
Beneath the noontide heat,)
And hath lost all command
Of limb, or foot, or hand,
But looks as one to Hades drawing nigh;
See to it that thou speakest seasonably:
Far as I search around
The toil that wakes no fear is still the noblest found.

1081-1169

Philoctetes

STROPHE I

O cave of hollow grot,
Now in the noontide hot,
Now cold with icy breath,
I may not then leave thee at any time,
But thou must still be with me e'en till death.

PHILOCTETES

Ah miserable me!
O dwelling fullest known
Of pain and wailing moan
From me, ah misery!
What now shall be my daily lot of life?
What hopes to me remain
My daily food to gain?
The timid birds will fly
Through the wild breezy sky;
For all my strength is vanished utterly.

Chorus

Thou, thou against thyself hast sentence passed,
O thou worn out and pained!
No spell of mightier Power is o'er thee cast,
For when thou mightest wisdom's path have gained,
Thou did'st, in wilful mood,
Prefer thine evil genius to the good.

Philoctetes

ANTISTROPHE I

Ah, worn with woe am I,
Worn out with misery,
Exposed to wanton scorn,
I in the years that come must pine away,
With no man near me, desolate, forlorn.
Ah me, ah, woe is me!
No longer wielding still,
In hands that once were strong,
My swift darts, can I hunger's cravings fill?
But crafty speech of meaning dark and wrong
Has subtly crept on me.
Oh, that I might but see
The man who planned this crime,
Sharing for equal time
The woe and pain that have been mine so long!

PHILOCTETES

Chorus

Fate was it, yea, 'twas Fate,
Fate of the Gods, no subtlety of guile,
That brought thy captive state ;
Turn then on others all thy bitter hate,
Thy curses hard and vile ;
I care at least for this,
That thou my proffered friendship should'st not miss.

Philoctetes

STROPHE II

Ah me, upon the shore,
Where the wild waters roar,
He sits and laughs at me,
And tosseth in his hand
What cheered my misery,
What ne'er till now another might command.
O bow, most dear to me,
Torn from these hands of mine,
If thou hast sense to see,
Thou lookest piteously
At this poor mate of thine,
The friend of Heracles,
Who never more shall wield thee as of old ;
And thou, full ill at ease,
Art bent by hands of one for mischief bold,
All shameful deeds beholding,
Deeds of fierce wrath and hate,
And thousand evils from base thoughts unfolding,
Which none till now had ever dared to perpetrate.

Chorus

It is a man's true part,
Of what is just to speak with words of good ;
But, having eased his heart,
Not to launch forth his speech of bitter mood.

PHILOCTETES

He was but one, urged on
By many to their will,
And for his friends hath won
A common help against a sore and pressing ill.

Philoctetes

ANTISTROPHE II

O winged birds that fly
Through the clear, open sky,
O tribes, whose eyes gleam bright,
Of beasts that roam the hills,
No more will ye in flight
Forth from my dwelling draw me at your will ;
For I no more possess
The might I had of old
(Ah me for my distress !)
In those fierce weapons bold ;
But now, with little care
This place is guarded against dreadest ill,
And none need now beware.
Come ye, 'tis now your hour to feast at will ;
On me your vengeance wreaking,
This livid flesh devour :
I soon shall fail ; for who, life's nurture seeking,
Can live on air, deprived of all earth's kind fields pour ?

Chorus

Nay, by the Gods, if still
Aught can thy feeling quicken for a friend,
Draw near, with all good will,
To one who fain his steps to thee would bend ;
But know, yea, know full well,
'Tis thine to end this woe.
Sad is't our ills to swell,
While they, in myriad forms, around us ever grow.

PHILOCTETES

1452-1468

Philoctetes

Come, then, and let us bid farewell
To this lone island where I dwell :
Farewell, O home that still did'st keep
Due vigil o'er me in my sleep ;
Ye nymphs by stream or wood that roam ;
Thou mighty voice of ocean's foam,
Where oftentimes my head was wet
With drivings of the South wind's fret ;
And oft the mount that Hermes owns
Sent forth its answer to my groans,
The wailing loud as echo given
To me by tempest-storms sore driven ;
And ye, O fountains clear and cool,
Thou Lykian well, the wolves' own pool—
We leave you, yea, we leave at last,
Though small our hope in long years past :
Farewell, O plain of Lemnos' isle,
Around whose coasts the bright waves smile,
Send me with prosperous voyage and fair
Where the great Destinies may bear,
Counsel of friends, and God supreme in Heaven,
Who all this lot of ours hath well and wisely given.

THE END

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